THE Poor Doubting CHRISTIAN Drawn to CHRIST.

Wherein the main Lets and Hinderances, which keep men from coming to Christ, are discovered.

With special Helps to recover Gods favour.

By THO. HOOKER.

Isa. 55. 1. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, drink of the waters of life; and he that hath no money, come buy, and eat freely.*

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THE

Poor doubting Christian drawn unto Christ.

JOHN 6. 45.

Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

THere are divers lets and impediments which hinder poor Christians from coming unto Christ; all which I desire to reduce to these following Heads.

First, Such hinderances as really keep men from coming to take hold

of Chriſt at all, which are briefly theſe.

Lets which hinder men from coming to Chriſt.

1. Blind careleſneſs, or preſumptuous Security, whereby men content themſelves with their preſent condition, preſuming all is well with them, when there is no ſuch matter.

2. Being convinced of this, they bethink how to ſave themſelves by their own ſtrength, and thereupon ſet upon a reformation of life, thinking to make God amends by reforming ſome ſins which they hear themſelves reproved of by the Miniſters.

3. The ſinner being convinced of his utter inability to pleaſe God in himſelf, at length gets up a ſtair higher, and ſees all his performances, and prayers, and duties to be of no power in themſelves, but that he muſt leave all, and cleave only unto Chriſt by Faith; and this he thinks he can do well enough, and ſo thruſts himſelf upon Chriſt, thinking all the work is then done, and no more to be looked after.

4. If he ſees this fails him too, then he goes yet further, and confeſſeth he cannot come to Chriſt, except Chriſt give him his hand, and help him up; therefore now he will attend upon the Ordinances, and labour and beſtir himſelf hard in the uſe of all good means, conceiving thereby to hammer out at laſt a *faith* of his own to make him happy. And here he reſts, hanging as it were upon the outſide of the Ark ſo long, till at laſt the waves and winds growing fierce and violent, he is beaten off, and ſo ſinks for ever.

Beſides theſe, there are other kinds of hinderances which do not indeed deprive a man of title and intereſt to eternal happineſs, but make the way tedious and uncomfortable, ſo that he cannot come to Chriſt ſo readily as he deſires and longs to do; the ground whereof is this: When men, out of carnal reaſon, contrive another way to come unto Chriſt than ever he ordained or revealed; when we *ſet up our ſtandards by Gods ſtandard*, or *our threſholds by his*,

Ezek. 43.8. and out of our own imagination, make another ſtate of believing than ever Chriſt required or ordained. No marvel that we come ſhort of him: For thus we put rubs, and make bars in our way: we manacle our hands, and fetter our feet, and then ſay, that we cannot take, nor go: Thus it is with you poor Chriſtians, and the fault is your own.

Three main hinderances which keep men from Chriſt.

But, amongſt many, there be three Hinderances which are chiefly to be obſerved, by which many gracious hearts are marvelouſly hindered from coming to, and from receiving that comfort from Chriſt which they might, and he is willing to impart unto them.

Firſt, The diſtreſſed Soul, being (haply) truly humbled, takes notice of the beauty of holineſs, and the Image of God ſtampt upon the hearts of his Children, and of all thoſe precious promiſes which God hath made to all that are his; now the Soul ſeeing theſe, begins thus to reaſon with it ſelf, and ſaith, Surely if I were ſo holy and ſo gracious, then

then I might have hope to receive the pardon of my ſins: or were my heart ſo enlarged ſo duties and could my heart be ſo carried with power againſt my corruptions, to maſter them, then there were ſome hope: But when I have no power againſt ſin, nor any heart to ſeek ſo importunately for a Chriſt, how dare I think that any mercy belongs to me, having ſo many wants? Thus they dare not come to the promiſe; and they will not venture upon it, becauſe they have not that enlargement to duties, and that power againſt corruption which ſometimes the Saints of God have.

But we muſt know, this doth not hinder; and that we make that a hinderance, which, in truth, is none. For (obſerve it) we muſt not think to bring our enlargements and hope to the promiſe, but go to the promiſe for them: Hope muſt be ſtirred, and Deſire quickned, and Love and Joy kindled by the promiſe. But who made this condition of the *Covenant*, That a man muſt have ſo

much of enlargement, before he can come to the promiſe? Our Saviour being our Husband, requires no portion with us, nor ever lookt after any: All that he looks for is meer poverty and emptineſs. If thou haſt nothing, yet he will have thee with thy nothing; provided that thou wilt have him. Therefore it is thus written; *The rich he ſends empty away*; but the poor he ſatisfies, and the thirſty he refreſhes with good; and ſo, as that there is nothing required on our ſide but to receive him as a Husband: For, *Buy without money* is the Text. You muſt not come and think to buy a Husband: the Lord looks for no power or ſufficiency from you, of your ſelves; nor of your ſelves any power againſt corruption, or enlargement to duties: If you will be content that Chriſt ſhall take all from you, and diſpoſe of you and all; then, take a Saviour, and then you have him.

Object. But the poor ſoul ſaith, *If I go thus hoodwink'd, how ſhall I know that I do not preſume; and how ſhall I know*

know that I have a true title to the Promiſe?

I anſwer: There is no better argument in the world to prove that thou haſt an intereſt in Chriſt, than this, which is thy taking of the Lord Chriſt as a Saviour wholly, and as an Husband only, *John* 1. 12. *As many as received him, to them he gave power to be the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name.* He doth not ſay, To as many as had ſuch enlargement to duties, and ſuch power againſt corruption; but if thou wilt take Chriſt upon thoſe terms on which he offers himſelf, there is no better argument under Heaven than that, to prove that thou haſt a title to the promiſe. Indeed, there is a deſperate deſpair that often ſeizeth upon the hearts of diſtreſſed ſinners. *Anſw.*

Therefore in the ſecond place, as the ſinner looks upon the excellency of Chriſt, and of Grace, and upon his own inſufficiency withal, which makes him that he will not venture upon the promiſe; ſo he looks too altogether upon his own ſinfulneſs 2.

and worthleſneſs, and therefore dare not venture upon it; he views the number of his ſins ſo many and vile, and the countenance of them ſo long, anddurable; and he ſeeth the floods of abominations coming in ſo amain upon his Soul, and Satan to boot, (who helps him forward in all this,) therefore he dares not make out unto Chriſt. But this is the policy of the Devil, who (if he can) will make a man to ſee ſin thorow his own Spectacle s,or not to ſee it at all; and then to ſay, There is mercy enough in a Saviour, and therefore I may live as I liſt. But when the ſinner will needs ſee his ſin, then he will let him ſee nothing but ſin; and this, to the end that he may deſpair for ever.

Now here the poor ſinner is at a ſtand, and can go no further; for tell him of the mercy of God, and of the plenteous redemption in Chriſt, and of the riches of the freeneſs of Gods grace: What(ſaith he) ſhould I think that there is any mercy for me, and that I have any intereſt in Chriſt? that

that were ſtrange. And thus the Soul is always poring, and always too much faſtned and ſetled upon his corruption, ever ſtirring the ſore, without ever going to the Phyſician. Where note, that a man is as well kept from looking to Chriſt by deſpair, as by preſumption. Before he ſees his ſin, he thinks his condition is good, and that he hath a ſufficiency of his own, and needs not go to Chriſt; and when he ſees his ſin, then he beholds ſo much vileneſs in himſelf, and in it, that he dares not go to Chriſt, leſt when he comes before him, he ſend him down to that ever-burning lake of fire and brimſtone. Herein the Devil is very ſubtile; but this doth not hinder our title to Chriſt; neither ought it to diſcourage us from laying hold on Salvation.

For firſt, (obſerve it,) For whom did Chriſt come into the world, and for whom did he dye when he was come? Was it for the *Righteous?* ſuch needed him not: It was for the *poor ſinner* that judges himſelf, that con-

condemns himſelf, and that he can-
2 Tim. 1. 15. not ſave himſelf. *Paul* ſaith, *Chriſt Jeſus came into the World to ſave ſinners, of whom I am the chief*: and Zech. 13. 1. *There is a Fountain opened for ſin and for uncleanneſs*; that is, for all ſorts of ſins, and kind of ſinners; be their iniquities never ſo great, and never ſo vile, there is a Fountain ſet open for them; come who will. There was never any ſaved that was not a Rebel firſt; nor any received to mercy, that firſt oppoſed not the mercies of God, and his grace in Chriſt. The fiery Serpents did ſting the people in the wilderneſs; firſt then they were ſtung, and, being ſtung, there was a brazen Serpent to heal them. But,

Obſerve the folly of this plea; what Scripture ever ſaid, that the greatneſs of mans ſin could hinder the greatneſs of Gods mercy? No Scripture ſaith ſo; we ſee *David* prayeth to the contrary, *Have mer-*
Pſal. 25. 11. *cy upon me, O Lord, and pardon my ſins, for they are great:* Nay, God himſelf doth the quite contrary, *Iſa.*

43.

43. 24, 25. *Thou haſt made me ſerve with thy ſins, and wearied me with thine iniquities, yet I am he that blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions for my Names ſake.* When the Jews did tire God with their diſtempered manners, and burdened him with their ſinful courſes, then the Lord for his own Names ſake would not ſo much as remember their iniquities againſt them.

Again obſerve, That ſins, though they be never ſo hainous of themſelves, yet if the ſoul can ſee them, and the heart be burdened with them, they are ſo far from hindering the work of Faith, and from making thee uncapable of mercy, that they fit thee the rather to go to Chriſt. The truth is (which I pray you take notice of,) it is not properly our unworthineſs, but our pride and haughtineſs that hinders us from coming to Chriſt; for we would have ſomething from our ſelves, and not all from him. But to the diſtreſſed ſoul, that ſees the vileneſs of his ſins; I ſay, Suppoſe thy ſins were

fewer,

fewer; yet upon ſuch a Suppoſe, thou wouldſt not go to Chriſt, as perſwaded of the freeneſs of his Grace; but becauſe thy ſins are not many, and upon conceit that thou haſt a worthineſs in thy ſelf, and wouldſt bring ſomething to Chriſt, and not receive all from him; therefore thou keepeſt back. And is it not plain (then) that it is thy pride, and thy ſelf-conceitedneſs that hinders thee? Thou muſt have thus much grace and holineſs; and Chriſt muſt not juſtifie the ungodly, but the godly man. But I tell thee, that, upon ſuch terms, he will never juſtifie thee or any man while the world ſtands.

Object. But the ſoul replies again; *My ſins are worſe than ſo, not only becauſe they are many, but becauſe of the mercy and ſalvation that I have rejected, and which hath been offered me from day to day.*

Anſw. But I anſwer: This cannot hurt thee, provided that thou canſt ſee thoſe evils of thine: For then, though thou haſt caſt away the kind-

kindneſs of the Lord, yet the Lord will not caſt thee away, if thou wilt come and ſeek him earneſtly again and again; *For the iniquity of his covetouſneſs I was wroth* (ſaith God) *and I ſmote him; I hid my ſelf, and he went on frowardly in the way of his own heart.* If this could have hindred, *Judah* ſhould never have received mercy: but the Text ſaith, I have ſeen his ways, and will heal him; *Thou haſt play'd the harlot with many Lovers, yet turn again to me, ſaith the Lord.* So then, there is no time paſt, if a man have but a heart to return. There is no limitation of the riches of Gods free grace, except the ſin againſt the holy Ghoſt; therefore ſaith Chriſt, *Rev.* 3. 20. *I ſtand at the door and knock:* Though he cry till he be hoarſe, and ſtand till he be weary, yet he ſtands ſtill: if any adulterous or deceitful wretch will open, the Lord will come in, and bring ſtore of comfort to him, and ſup with him.

Isa. 57. 17, 18.

Jer. 3 1.

Oh, all that is true, ſaith the poor ſoul, had I but a heart to mourn for my *Object.*

my baſeneſs. See my ſins I do, but this is my miſery, I cannot be burdened with them; I have a heart that cannot break and mourn for diſhonouring of God, and offending him ſo many ways. But I ſay,

Anſw. This hurts not neither; provided that thy heart be weary of it ſelf, becauſe it cannot be weary of ſin. *The Lord ſheweth mercy, becauſe he will ſhew mercy*: It is not becauſe thou canſt pleaſe him, but becauſe mercy pleaſeth him. When did the Lord ſhew mercy to *Paul*? I ſay, When? but even when *Paul* did expreſs moſt malice againſt him? *Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me*? He perſecutes Chriſt, and yet Chriſt pities him, and ſhews him mercy: and ſo the churliſh *Jaylor*, when he was moſt oppoſite againſt the means of grace, the Lord even then ſhewed moſt compaſſion upon him. He that (before) reſiſted the means of grace, was now brought home by thoſe means that before he reſiſted.

Mich. 7. 18.

Act. 16.

Object. But wo to me (ſaith the poor Soul) you are now come to the quick;

quick: this very word is like a Milſtone about my neck, and I in the Sea, ready to be ſunk for ever. This is the depth of that baſeneſs that lies on me, even this, That all the means can do no better upon me. Why? what though *Paul* and the Jaylor were bad enough, ſo bad as you ſay? Yet they were made better by the means: but this is my hopeleſs condition, That the means of grace prevail nothing on me. Oh, is there ſuch a heart in Hell as I have? for how bad muſt it needs be, when all the means in the world can do it no more good! and now, methinks, I feel my heart more hard and inexorable under all Gods Ordinances, than when at firſt I believed. My condition therefore is (moſt certainly) hopeleſs, ſeeing the means that ſhould ſoften me, do but harden me, and make me worſe.

Anſ. This is the laſt plea whereby the Devil keeps in, and poſſeſſeth the heart of a poor heartleſs ſinner. But let me anſwer thee; and for anſwer I ſay: This hurts not neither: for here

here at leaſt thou maiſt have hope of mercy? And here obſerve theſe three things by way of anſwer; and know that,

1. Firſt, The Word and means of grace do work good, if they make thee more ſenſible of thy hardneſs and deadneſs, though haply they work not that good, and after that manner that thou deſireſt; yet if they make thee to ſee thy baſeneſs, thy hardneſs of heart, and dulneſs of ſpirit, in regard of that body of death which hangs upon thee, then the Word and They work in the beſt manner; becauſe it is after Gods manner, howſoever not after thine. That Phyſick works moſt kindly, that makes the party ſick before it works: ſo it is with the Word: before, thou hadſt a proud heart, and didſt therefore lift up thy ſelf in thine own abilities, and didſt truſt in thine own ſtrength, and thou thoughtſt that thy care, and the improvement of the means, would work wonders: But now the Word works ſweetly, when it makes thee

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apprehenſive, that a wounded ſoul is the gift of God, not of man, nor of the means; when it makes thee look up to God for it, and to prize it when thou haſt it; and to wait upon God with thy daily Prayers, ſtill to continue it ſo. To feel deadneſs, is life; and to feel hardneſs, is ſoftneſs; only remember this one Caution; Except there be ſome luſt or diſtemper that thy heart hankers after, (for then the word will harden thee, becauſe thou hardeneſt thy ſelf) that one I ſay excepted, thou art in a good way.

Secondly, (mark this, I beſeech you) Thou art the cauſe why thy heart is not ſoftned, and why the Word works not upon thy ſoul: the diſtemper of thine own heart, hinders the working of the Word, and diſpenſation of Gods Providence, and the tenour of the Covenant of Grace. Thou thinkeſt to limit the holy One of *Iſrael*; but that may not be: for, his Covenant is a Covenant of Grace; and the Lord (who is free) will not ſtand bent to thy bow, or give 2.

give thee grace when thou wilt; for, *it is not for* us *to know the times and ſeaſons.* What if the Lord will not give thee grace this year, nor the next, nor all thy life? if at the laſt gaſp he will drop in a little of his favour, it is more than he ows thee. Therefore hear to day, and wait to morrow, and continue in ſo doing, becauſe thou knoweſt not when God may bleſs his own Ordinances. Complain not of delays, but wait, for God hath waited for you long; and therefore if he make you wait for peace of conſcience, and aſſurance of his love, he deals but equally with you, and as ſhall be beſt with you. God gives what, and when, and how he will, therefore wait for it.

Wait for mercy.

3. Thirdly, Know and conſider, that thou haſt reſted upon thine own duties and endeavours, and ſo doeſt not go to God, that bleſſeth both the means, and all the endeavours of his this way. The fault therefore is thine own, (I ſay) thine own, becauſe thou reſteſt in thine own performances, and in the power of the means

Reſt not upon duties.

means that thou apprehendeſt, and doeſt not go to God, that would have wrought more than all they can: for, did a man depend upon Gods power and mercy in his Ordinances, he ſhould always find ſome proportionable ſuccour, as well when he finds no ſucceſs, as when he finds any. God ſometimes gives, and ſometimes delays to give: but Gods love is as conſtant when he gives not, as when he gives. Therefore labour to quit all carnal confidence in holy duties. Reſt not in thine own performances, but look beyond all duties, to God, and deſire him to give thee the ſucceſs above them.

Watch how thy Soul behaves it ſelf after the naked diſcharge of a duty: all quiet and calm, notwithſtanding he lives in a daily courſe and practice of ſin; ſo that he prays and lyes, faſts and cozens, and yet this makes all whole: I tell you, it is an undoubted argument, that the ſoul did place a carnal confidence in his own performances, and as yet never

never attained to a Lord Chriſt in the duty: For he that ſeeks a Saviour in his duties, and reſts not in ſelf-performances, this man brings a Saviour, a Chriſt into his ſoul. And mark what follows: Chriſt brings pardoning vertue and purging vertue with him, and gives him more power againſt corruptions, and more ſuſpicion over his own ſoul than ever he had before: ſo that the ſoul begins to quarrel with it ſelf, and lies down with ſhame, and ſays, What ſhall I think of my praying and hearing? where is the vertue and power of it? Did ever Chriſt hear my prayers, or come into my ſoul by his Ordinances? Where is the purging vertue, then, to clear me of my ſins? where is the purifying vertue to cleanſe me of my corruptions? This is a ground of a gracious heart, that placeth not any confidence in holy duties, but only in the Lord Chriſt.

Do not content your ſelves in this that you ſee a need of a Saviour, becauſe your minds are enlightned therein, and your reaſon perſwaded thereof

thereof; when in the mean time you place a kind of confidence in the duty performed and ſervice diſcharged, and think thereby to bring Chriſt at your beck, and you in the mean while do what you pleaſe: this is a wonderful cunning craft of Satan. This I ſay then: A man may ſee a need of a Saviour; but do not quiet thy ſoul, becauſe thou knoweſt it muſt be ſo, and becauſe thou findeſt by experience thou canſt not help thy ſelf, the guilt of ſin ſtill ſticks upon thee, and therefore a Saviour now muſt help thee: I ſay, content not thy ſelf with the meer notion of it, to ſay, I ſee it ſhould be ſo, and it muſt be ſo, and reſt thy ſelf contented in the performances of ſervices, and think to bring a Saviour at thy beck, to do what thou wilt for thy ſoul; this is a ſlight that Satan has pinn'd to thy ſoul. Many think to have a ſoveraign authority over Chriſt, when they have performed duties: ſo that he does not uſe the means to be led to Chriſt, but he takes up his duties to be commanders

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of Chriſt, and that he may diſpoſe of Chriſt for his own turn; ſo that he makes Chriſt an abetter of his own wickedneſs, not a ſubduer of his corruptions. This is a marvellous deceit, when men reſt in their own abilities, and ſo abuſe Chriſt. And this will appear in theſe particulars.

Firſt, Watch how thy heart is in the performance of duty. Doth thy prayer, and hearing, and performing of ſervices, make thee venturous and fool-hardy to meddle with corruptions? then its a certain ground thou placeſt carnal confidence in thine own performances. As for example; If a Profeſſor ſhould ſay, What if I do now and then ſin? and what if I do now and then pilfer, and uſe falſe weights and meaſures? I'le but pray ſo much the more, and faſt ſo much the oftner: will not my Conſcience then be ſatisfied? It ſhall be ſatisfied; I will command it: I will put in bail for my ſin, and pray againſt it. Now I beſeech you obſerve it; this praying and perform-

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ing of duties, is meerly to command a Saviour to give allowance to ſin, that ſo he may commit it freely. As who would ſay, I have authority over my Saviour, and he ſhall pardon my ſin, and give me allowance to commit ſin. O the wretched villany that is in this man's heart! Fearful is thy eſtate, whoſoever thou art, that makeſt thy performances an abettor of thy diſtempers: ſo that thou doeſt thy duties not to convey Chriſt, that he may help thee to prevent ſin, but that Chriſt may take off the venome and indignation of ſin, that ſo thou may'ſt commit wickedneſs without either ſuſpicion or further diſtraction.

Many a man makes his ſervices his Saviours. For, he makes them the bottom to bear up his Conſcience; the ground whereof is this. Haply he finds and feels by woful experience, what the fruits of ſin are. He ſees the venom of his corruptions, and the lamentable effects of all his ſinful practices. He thought it before a fine thing to ſwear, and

lye, and drink, and follow baſe company; but now they are gravel to his heart, and gall to his ſoul. His conſcience fleeth in his face, and he is ready to ſink down to Hell under the burden of his miſorder'd life. Conſcience ſaith, Theſe be thy ſins, and theſe will be thy damnation: they have been thy delight, but they will prove thy ſhame and confuſion in the end; and ſhortly thou ſhalt find the ſmart of them: To Hell therefore, be packing, and gone.

Now this man hath no other cure for his Conſcience in ſuch a caſe, but this; He intreats Conſcience to be quiet. He confeſſeth he hath lived in baſe courſes, and his condition to be very miſerable; but now he will reform all. He hath neglected Prayer heretofore, but now he will pray: he hath hated God's ſervants, but now he will love them; his ways have been exceeding evil, but now he will reform them, and now he will turn over a new leaf. This he ſaith, and this (he thinks) will ſerve the turn. And thus many poor Souls uſe the

mean

means as *Mediators*, and ſo fall ſhort of Chriſt. But a gracious heart doth not only *pray*, and *hear*, and *receive*, and uſe all poſſible means to obtain Chriſt, but is reſtleſs and unſatisfied till he enjoy and poſſeſs Chriſt in the means. He reſts not upon the bare performance of any duty, neither thinks by vertue of any ſuch his endeavours to get into Chriſt.

I will expreſs this particular more fully in this manner. A rich Uſurer that is ſick of ſome diſeaſe; tell him ſuch a Phyſician can cure him, but he ſtands upon ſtate, and will not come without a great deal of charge. Charge (ſaith he) I do not ſtand upon that; I have money enough by me, enough to fetch him hither. Such a man now placeth all his confidence in his money. So when the ſoul ſees the guilt of ſin is not removed, and that *Conſcience* is ſtill ſnarling, and that (the Law condemning him) Chriſt is the only Saviour, and he only that can ſatisfie and cure all. But now, How ſhall Chriſt be procured? Why? His

prayer, and *faſting*, and *performances* may command ſo much, and that by the power and merit of the work done. The voice of a Phariſee, and proper language of a Papiſt. But what promiſe is there for it? Within book none. But thus fools reſt on their own performances, and ſo fall ſhort of Chriſt and Salvation.

Object. *But oh* (ſaith a poor ſinner) *faith would I go out of my ſelf. I ſee it well now, that I have reſted, and do reſt upon duties done; but I cannot do my ſelf as I would.*

Anſw. I anſwer, It is Satans ſubtilty to keep us in our ſelves, by endeavouring thus to make us go out of our ſelves. For by our own ſtrength he would have us to do it; and perſwades us we may. But this is the marvellous deepneſs of his, wherein he ſhews both malice and cunning in the ſuperlative. For here he makes us believe (and we out of ignorance are perſwaded as he would have us) that we have the ſtaff in our own hands that is, the power to get out of our ſelves. But is it ſo?

Oh no, it is a ſupernatural work to be ſo quit of our ſelves. The ſame hand muſt bring us out of our ſelves, that muſt bring us to Chriſt: and this is *Self-denyal:* and *Self denyal* is, When the ſoul knoweth it hath no thing, and therefore is ſo over-powred with the mighty hand of God, and the work of his Spirit, that it doth not ſo much as expect any power or ability from it ſelf, or from the creature, in the doing of any good: For it knows it is dead, and therefore cannot help it ſelf, much leſs can the creature do it any good. It therefore looks up to Heaven, and ſeeks allſufficiency from God alone. For (obſerve it) whiles I thus think that I have ability to go out of my ſelf; do I not then ſay, that I have a principle within me to deny my ſelf? But it is not ſo; rather it is quite contrary: for to deny a man's ſelf, is to know that he hath no power in himſelf to do any ſpiritual duty: therefore we muſt look only to the voice that calleth us, the voice of Chriſt, and know that he that

Self denial, what it is.

calls us from the ways of darkneſs and out of our ſelves, muſt and will bring us out. Therefore expect only power from Chriſt to pluck thee out of thy ſelf, and to make thee a Believer; for the ſame hand muſt do both, or it will never be.

I would not have a poor creature think thus with himſelf: If this means, and theſe Ordinances will do me no good, nor work upon my heart, I ſhall never have comfort: but ſpeak thus unto God, and ſay In truth, Lord, I expect no power from my ſelf, nor from the means but my reſolution is, to look up to him that hath hid his face yet from his poor ſervant. I will not look any lower, as here within my ſelf, for any ſuch power: No, Lord, but to the higheſt in power and gifts. No will I look to the Miniſter, or to the means, but I will wait upon thee (O Lord) and look up to thy power, to work by thine own means. Remember what *Iſaiah* ſaith: *Iſa.50.20.* *Who is amongſt you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voyce of his ſervants, that walk*

walketh in darkneſs, and hath no light of comfort, let him truſt in the Name of the Lord, and ſtay himſelf upon his God. Then when all other things in the world fail, let the ſoul look up to the Lord, and get away from it ſelf. For then is the fitteſt time of all to meet with God. I would have a Chriſtian chuſe this time above all times, the fitteſt wherein to meet his Saviour, and to diſappoint Satan: for as I ſaid, it is the laſt refuge that the Devil hath: and if he miſs of this, his force is gone for ever. For otherwiſe the ſinner, partly ſeeing the beauty of grace, will not; and partly ſeeing the baſeneſs of his own heart, will not dare to come to Chriſt.

But the next complaint, in the next place, is want of ſenſe and feeling, ſuch as a Chriſtian muſt have, and finds not. Therefore the diſtreſſed ſoul ſaith, *Alas, I never knew what it was to have the aſſurance of Gods love; I never received any evidence of Gods favour; and can I (then) think that I have Faith? they* *Object.*

that believe, have their hearts filled with joy unſpeakable and glorious; the Word ſaith as much. But I am a ſtranger to this joy; how then can I think that I have any work of Faith wrought in me?

Anſw. I anſwer; This doth not hinder, either that thou haſt not Faith, or that thou may'ſt not come to God by believing. Only remember theſe three particulars.

1. Firſt, Thou muſt not think to have this joy and refreſhing before thou goeſt to the promiſe; thou muſt look for it when thou haſt chewed and fed upon it: or wouldeſt thou have the Lord give thee the whole bargain at once, and before the match be made? This *joy* is a fruit that proceeds from *faith* after much wreſtling; and doth not preſently flow from Faith, nor ſo ſoon as ever a Chriſtian begins to believe, but after a time; and then the heart is joyous; but never filled with joy before believing. Afterwards, and when a man hath had the ſweet dew of the promiſes dropping upon him; but many

many a day after, let him look for this joy.

Secondly, Know that theſe joys, and this ſenſe and feeling may be abſent from Faith. For a man may have a good Faith, and yet want the reliſh and ſweetneſs which he longs after. One may want what he deſires, and yet want neither life nor heat. A tree may want leaves and fruit, and yet want neither ſap nor moiſture: and a mans Faith may be ſomewhat ſtrong, when his feeling is nothing at all. *David* was juſtified and ſanctified, and yet wanted this joy. And *Job* truſted upon God when he had but little feeling; as when he ſaith, *Thou makeſt me a Butt to ſhout at; yet I will truſt in thee though thou kill me.* Therefore build not your comfort upon ſenſe and feeling, which is to build upon the ſand; but go to the promiſe, as to the rock for it.

But how comes this deſire after Chriſt?

I anſwer: There is no more but two affections in the ſoul, God infinitely wiſe having ſo framed it; and

theſe two are Hope and Deſire. The Underſtanding ſays, Such a thing is profitable and comfortable if I had it; then Hope is ſent out to wait for that goodneſs: and if it comes not, then deſire is ſent out to meet that goodneſs: Hope ſtands and waits for it: but Deſire wanders up and down ſeeking and enquiring after a Lord Jeſus, and goes from coaſt to coaſt, from Eaſt to Weſt; Oh that I could, O that I might, and When ſhall I? And how may I come to the ſpeech of a Lord Chriſt? As it was with the Spouſe in *Cant.* when her Beloved was gone, ſhe wandred up and down ſeeking of him, and enquiring of the watchmen if they did not ſee him her ſoul loved; ſo wanders from this thing to that thing, from this place to that place, and never ceaſeth to ſee if ſhe can gain notice of Chriſt. It goes to Prayer, to ſee if that will entreat a Chriſt: it goes to the Word, to ſee if that will reveal a Chriſt: it goes to conference, to ſee if he can hear of Chriſt there: then it comes to the Congregation, and to the

the Sacrament, to ſee if it can hear of any news of a Lord Chriſt, and of mercy.

The ſoul thus continues wandring and ſeeking till at laſt the Lord Chriſt comes into the ſoul, when the ſoul hath thus hungred & longed for him. At length the Lord Chriſt is pleaſed to ſhew himſelf in view: *Behold, thy King cometh*: ſo the Lord ſays, *Behold the Lamb of God that takes away* thy ſins. O thou poor broken hearted ſinner, here is thy Saviour; he is come down from Heaven to ſpeak peace to thy ſoul in the pardon of thy ſins. Thou that hungreſt for a Chriſt, here he is, to ſatisfie thee. Thou that thirſteſt after Chriſt, here he is, to refreſh thee. Thou that haſt long ſought him, he ſaith, Here I am, and all my merits are thine.

Now when the Lord Jeſus is pleaſed to preſent himſelf to the ſoul, now Deſire hath met with the Lord.

It is in this caſe with a ſinner, as it is with a Traytor who is purſued, and takes a ſtrong Hold, and is there beſieged: And now he ſeeth no

hope:

hope of favour, nor no hope of eſcape, therefore he is content to ſubmit, and lay his head on the block, that he may receive puniſhment for his offence: now coming to execution, he hears an inkling from the Meſſenger there is yet hope he may be pardoned. The poor Traytor in the priſon with that is ſtirred up to hope. Nay then he hears by another Meſſenger from the King himſelf, If he will come to the Court, and ſeek unto his Majeſty, and importune his Grace for mercy and favour, it's like he ſhall be pardoned. Then he makes haſte, and Deſire carries him to the Court to ſue for favour from the King. So that now he will be liſtening and enquiring of every one there, Did you hear the King ſpeak nothing of me? How ſtands the Kings mind towards me? Pray how goes my caſe? Then ſome tells him, The truth is, the King hears you are humbled, and that you are ſorry for what you have done: at laſt the King looks out of the window, and ſees the malefactor, and ſays, Is this the Tray-

Traytor? One ſays, Yes, if it pleaſe your Highneſs, this is the man, that is humbled and pleads for mercy, and deſires nothing ſo much as favour. Hereupon, the King being full of mercy, tells him, The truth is, his Pardon is a drawing, and coming towards. With that, his heart leaps in his belly, and his heart is enlarged towards his Majeſty, and he ſays, God bleſs your Majeſty; never was there ſuch a favourable Prince to ſo poor a Traytor. His heart leaps for joy, becauſe his Pardon is coming towards him. Haply it is not ſealed yet: Now when it is ſealed, and all done, the King calls him in, and delivers it.

So it is with a poor ſinner, he is the malefactor. You that have committed high Treaſon, you think not of it: but take heed, God will purſue you one day. Haply God lets you alone for the preſent, but he will ſurpriſe you on a ſudden, and Conſcience will pluck thee by the throat, and carry thee down to Hell. And now the Lord purſues him with a heavy

heavy ſtroke and indignation, and let flye at his face, and ſets Conſcience a work as a Purſevant, and that ſays, Theſe are thy ſins, and to Hell thou muſt go: God hath ſent me to execute thy ſoul. Now the poor ſoul ſees he can no way eſcape from the Lord, and to purchaſe any favour he ſees it impoſſible; therefore he is reſolved to lie down at Gods feet, and hope. Now hope is a faculty of the ſoul to look out for mercy: as a man that is in expectation of the coming of his friend, goeth to the top of a hill, looks round about him, to ſee if he can underſtand any thing of his friend: ſo the ſoul hopes and waits, and ſtretcheth it ſelf out for mercy. When will it be, Lord? when will this Pardon come? The Soul gets up, and ſtands as it were a tiptoe: O when will it come, Lord?

How does God ſtir up the heart to hope? It's worth the while to conſider how this is maintained.

Firſt, The Lord ſweetly ſtays the heart, and perſwades it that his ſins are pardonable, and that the good he wants

wants may be ſupplied; this is a great ſupport to the Soul. Hope is always of a good to come. Now when a poor ſinner ſees his ſins, the number of them, the nature of them, the vileneſs of them, the curſedneſs of his ſoul, that he can take no reſt; he ſees no reſt in the creature, nor in himſelf. Though he pray all day, yet he cannot get the pardon of one ſin. The ſoul is out of any expectation of pardon, or power of mercy in any thing he hath or doth: Though all means, all helps, though all men and Angels ſhould joyn together, yet they cannot pardon one ſin of his. Now the Lord lifts up his voyce, and ſays from Heaven, Thy ſins are pardonable. O the infiniteneſs of Gods power! though the guilt of ſin is powerful to condemn the Soul. But when the infinite power of the Lord is conſidered, as able to over-power all his ſins, this lifteth up the heart in ſome expectation that the Lord will ſhew mercy to a man; though it is a hard thing to hope, when the Soul is thus troubled: (Can this heart be bro-

broken? can theſe ſins be pardoned? can this ſoul be ſaved?) Now comes in the power of God. God can pardon them. Never meaſure the power of God by that ſhallow conceit of thine. All things are poſſible to God, though not to men. And as it is ſaid of *Abraham*, *He hoped aboved hope*; he looked to the Lord that was able to do what he had promiſed: he conſidered not that he had a dead body, but that he had a living God to hope on. Juſtice cannot be ſo ſevere to revenge thee, as mercy is gracious to do good unto thee. If thy ſins be never ſo many, Gods Juſtice never ſo great; yet Mercy is above all thy ſins, above all thy Rebellions. This may ſupport thy ſoul.

So there you have the firſt ground to ſtir up Hope; Thy ſins are pardonable. There is more power in God to ſhew mercy to thee, than power in ſin to deſtroy thee. The Lord Jeſus Chriſt came to ſeek and to *ſave that which was loſt*; it was the ſcope of his coming. Now ſaith the broken and humble ſinner, I am loſt.

loſt. Did Chriſt come to ſave ſinners? then Chriſt muſt fail of his end, or I of my comfort. God ſays, *Come to me all that are weary and heavy laden* I am weary: unleſs the Lord intended good to me, Why did he invite me, and bid me come? Surely he means to ſhew mercy to me.

O take heed of Deſpair. Queſtion thy eſtate thou mayeſt, thou muſt; but to caſt away all hope, is very hainous in the eyes of the Lord. Caſt away all carnal confidence thou muſt, and yet thou muſt hope. *Let Iſrael hope in the Lord, for in the Lord,* &c. The Lord takes this very ill at our hands. Thou goeſt to the deep dungeon of thy corruption, and there thou ſayeſt theſe ſins can never be pardoned: I am ſtill proud, and more ſtubborn: This diſtreſs God ſeeth not, God ſuccoureth not, his hand cannot reach, his mercy cannot ſave. Now mark what the Prophet ſaith to ſuch a perplexed Soul, *Iſai.* 40. 27. *Why ſayeſt thou thy way is hid from the Lord?* The Lord ſaith, Why ſayeſt thou ſo? *The young man*

ſhall

ſhall faint and be weary; but they that wait on the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? you wrong God exceedingly: you think it's matter of humility, to count your ſelf ſo vile. Can God pardon ſuch a wretches ſin as mine? Mark that place of the *Pſalmiſt*; they ſpake againſt the Lord, *Can the Lord prepare a Table in the Wilderneſs?* They ſpake not againſt themſelves, but againſt the Lord. So we ſpeak againſt God, and charge God himſelf. It is true, ſays the ſoul, *Manaſſeh* was pardoned, *Paul* was converted, Gods Saints have been received to mercy: But can my ſin be pardoned? can my Soul be quickned? No, no, my ſins are greater than can be pardoned, ſaith the deſpairing Soul. Conſider how injurious this is to God, to make the power of ſin greater to condemn thee: than the power of God to ſave thee: to make the power of Satan ſtronger to ruinate thee, than the power of God to relieve thee, and ſuccour thee. And what can you ſay more? and what

what can you do more againſt the Lord? Is not this to make God an underling to Satan, and to ſin? This is juſt to ſay, The Almightineſs of God is weaker than the weakneſs of ſin; The ſufficiency of God is weaker than the malice of Satan. It is ſo; poor humble ſinners many times will make bitter complaints this way; and they think they ſpeak againſt themſelves. No, no, they ſpeak againſt the Lord. They ſpake againſt the Lord, when they ſaid, *Can the Lord prepare a Table in the Wilderneſs?* So you ſpeak in this deſperate manner: Why truth, Lord, this proud heart will never be humbled, if any thing would have wrought, it would have been done ere this day. How many Sermons, how many Mercies, how many Judgments, how many Prayers? and yet this proud heart, this ſtubborn heart will not be reformed. You think you ſpeak againſt your ſelves now: no, no, you ſpeak againſt the Lord. And know, this is one of the greateſt ſins thou committeſt, to ſay thy

ſins

ſins cannot be forgiven.

Secondly, As this ſin is injurious to God, ſo it's dangerous to thy own Soul: It is that which takes up the bridge, and cuts off all paſſages, and there can no Spiritual comfort nor conſolation come into the Soul of a poor ſinner, *Luke* 3. 15. *Every ditch muſt be filled, and then all fleſh ſhall ſee the ſalvation of the Lord.* What are theſe Ditches? Why nothing elſe but thoſe deep gulfs and ditches of deſpair: and unleſs theſe be filled, no man can ſee the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. The truth is, this deſpair of the Soul, is that which cuts the ſinews of mans comfort, and takes off the power and edge of all the means of grace; it daunts all a mans endeavours; nay, it plucks up endeavours by the very roots: for that which a man deſpairs of, he will never labour after. It's here, as with a man in the pangs of death: unto ſuch a man, all things are unavailable for his good: his bed will not eaſe him, meat will not refreſh him, chafing will not revive him; at laſt

we.

we ſay He is gone, he is a dead man; Friends leave him, Phyſitians leave him: They may go and pray for him, and mourn for him, but they cannot recover him. So this deſpair of ſoul makes a man caſt off all hope, and lie down in a forlorn condition, expecting no good to come. Alas, ſaith the poor ſoul, what skilleth for a man to pray? what profiteth it a man to read? what benefit in all the means of Grace? The truth of it is, the ſtone is rolled upon me, and my condemnation is ſealed for ever, and therefore I will never look after Chriſt, grace and ſalvation any more. Let him come to hear the word, and mark how he caſts off the benefit of it. It was marvellous ſeaſonable and profitable; it was the good Word of God unto ſuch as have ſhare therein: why then may not you expect benefit therefrom? No, ſaith the ſoul, the time of grace is paſt, the day is gone. If Miniſters would pray for him, and good people pray for him, he bids them ſave their labour; for Hell is his portion, and

and his condemnation is ſealed i
Heaven. See now and conſider wha
deſperate danger Deſpair brings to
poor heart, and carries him beyon
the reach of mercy. That's a ſwe
paſſage of *Davids Pſalm* 77. 7. *Wil*
the Lord caſt me off for ever? I ſai
this is my infirmity, ſaith the Tex
The word in the Original, *This is m*
ſickneſs, as who ſhould ſay, This woul
be my death: What, is mercy gon
for ever? then my life is gone, the
is all my comfort gone, my hop
gone: Therefore take heed of this
it takes off the edge of all our ende
vours and Gods Ordinances tha
might do us good.

Secondly, This marvellouſly con
demns that great ſin of Preſumpti
on; a ſin more frequent, and if it b
poſſible, more dangerous. The pre
ſumption of carnal hypocrites tha
bolſter themſelves up with marvel
lous boldneſs in their courſe. It is
true here, and I beſeech you obſerv
it, as they ſaid, *Saul hath ſlain his tho*
ſands, and David his ten thouſands
Deſpair hath ſlain his thouſands, bu
pre

preſumption his ten thouſands. That men may ſwear, and lye, and cozen, and break all Commands, and yet hope to be ſaved. They hope Grace will ſave them, and yet reſiſt Grace. They hope Jeſus Chriſt will ſave them, and yet oppoſe Chriſt. This is that which hath ſlain many thouſands among us: and they are few that have not ſplit upon this rock. And therefore I ſay, This ſerves to reprove the baſeneſs of ſuch Hypocrites that boaſt themſelves, and compare their hopes with the hopes of the Saints. It is true, ſay they, I cannot walk ſo freely, I cannot repeat a Sermon, I have not thoſe parts that they have; yet I hope to be ſaved as well as they. This is that which hath ſlain ſo many thouſands of ſouls that are now roaring in Hell; and they may thank preſumption for it.

Now this Hope is not the Hope of the Saints. The Hope of the Saints is a grounded hope: but theſe hopes hang upon ſome idle pleas and fooliſh pretences, and ſome carnal reaſons: But I tell you they will fail,

fail, and ſink into the bottomleſs pi
ere they are aware. It is the com
mand and counſel of *Peter*, Tha
every man ſhould be ready to give a
account of his faith and hope that is i
him. Look to the reaſons that can
you, and to the arguments that per
ſwade you; ſee they be not ground
leſs and fooliſh hopes. You hope t
be ſaved, and you hope to go t
Heaven, and you hope to ſee the fac
of God with comfort. Look abou
I ſay; good hope hath good reaſon
grounded hope grounded reaſons.

Thirdly, The Saints of God man
times are deprived of comfort: no
becauſe God with-holds it, but be
cauſe they put it from themſelve
and will not have it though he offe
Pſal. 77. it: as *David, My ſoul refuſed com-*
fort: he was as a ſullen child tha
will not eat his milk, becauſe he can
not have it in the golden diſh. So
ſometimes, and becauſe God doth no
for us what we would, we will have
nothing at all. Theſe are the main
hinderances, and I might add ma-
ny more: for carnal reaſon is
very

very fruitful this way, and we through our own folly, and the devils craft, are apt to abuſe things, and to make them hinderances in our way to happineſs eternal. I come now to the cures of all theſe impediments, where, if we had the wiſdom and care we ſhould have, we might break through them all to Chriſt. The Means (eſpecially) are four, whereby we may be inwardly ſtrengthened againſt them all, and be at laſt able to overcome, and put them to foil for ever.

Helps to come to Chriſt.

The firſt Cure and Help is this; We muſt not look too long, nor pore too much, or unwarrantably upon our own corruptions within, ſo far as to be feared or diſheartned by them from coming to the riches of Gods grace. For this is a ſure and everlaſting truth, That whatſoever ſight of ſin unfits a man for mercy, when he may take it, and it is offered, that ſight of ſin is ever ſinful, though it have never ſo fair an outſide of ſorrow and deep humiliation. Namely, as when we think, and ſay, (as often

we do) Had a Soul ſo thorowly humbled, and bruiſed, and ſoftened, and ſo forth, I could do well enough. And thus the Devil keeps us in ſin, by poring too long and much upon our ſins; as thinking thereby to get from them. But ſuch a courſe is a ſinful courſe. Tell not me of ſorrow, and repentance, and humiliation; all that ſorrow, and humiliation, and repentance, is naught that keeps a man from receiving mercy, when there is need, and it is offered. See this in *Abraham*: he had this promiſe, that he ſhould have a ſon in his old age. And, *He being not weak in Faith regarded not his old age or deadneſs, nor the barrenneſs of* Sarah's *Womb, but believed in him who had promiſed it.* There he reſts, and there he ſtays, he ſaw his body was dead, yet there was a living promiſe: and what though *Sarah*'s womb was barren, yet the promiſe was fruitful. He knew his own deadneſs and her barrenneſs; but he ſtood not long there. As *Abraham* therefore, ſo we may ſee our ſins, and conſider our many

True godly ſorrow what it is.

Rom. 4. 19.

many weaknesſes, but muſt not ſo ſettle upon them, or conſider of them as to be hindered by them from coming to God for mercy, which he freely offers us, and we ſtand in need of: for, while the ſoul of a man is daily plodding upon his own miſery and diſtempered life, theſe two things follow.

Firſt, Stop the ſtream of Gods promiſe, and let down the ſluce againſt it, ſo that the promiſe cannot enter into us. 1.

And Secondly, We ſet open the ſtream and floodgate of corruption, and make it to run moſt violently down, and to flood in upon us; and in the end to overwhelm us. Now the inconvenience ariſing hereby, is enough to ſlay the beſt Chriſtian in the world; for what can a man get out of his corruption? he can have no more thereof than is to be had; and it is in vain to look for comfort where it is not to be had: all this and the leaſt of all this, may diſhearten us, but will never encourage us, or put heart into us. See the humility 2.

and wiſedom of the woman of Ca-
Mat. 15. 17. *naan*; ſhe follows Chriſt; but he liſtens not to her, but gives her a ſon foile, and calls her *dog*; and ſaith you Gentiles are *dogs*; and the Goſpel of Grace and Salvation is the *Childrens bread*. Now if ſhe had only conſidered the words of Chriſt, and only looked into her ſelf and her own baſeneſs, ſhe had never come to have received either mercy or comfort from him. But ſhe ſaith, Truth Lord, I am a *dog* yet the *dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their Maſters Table*. This was her ſure reſolution: wherein there are two things which expreſs and ſet forth the frame of a gracious heart; a heart that is truly wiſe to attend to its own baſeneſs with faith: and that is her *Humility* and *Wiſdom*: as if ſhe had ſaid, Thou ſayeſt I am a *Gentile*, and a *Dog*; I confeſs it: there's her humility. Yet though I am a Dog, I will not go out of doors, but lie under the table for mercy: there's her wiſdom. And thus ſhe; and ſo we muſt, and ſhould

ſhould when our corruptions (as I ſaid) flood in upon us, and we ſee our ſelves quite loſt, and damned in our ſins, we muſt then ſay, In truth Lord, I am as bad as thy word can make me, yet let me not flye from mercy but lye at the feet of my Saviours mercy, till he look upon me as once upon *Peter*, *Luke* 22. 61.

It is fit, and we ought to ſee our ſins: but ſtay we muſt not too long there: ſee them we muſt, but not faſten on them, ſo as to ſhackle us from coming to Chriſt. I have ſaid it, and will ſay it, That that ſight of ſin which doth not drive a man to Chriſt for mercy, is ever ſinful. Labour therefore to ſee thy ſins, and that thus;

How to ſee ſin aright.

Firſt, See thy ſins in the Royal Law, as in the right glaſs; a glaſs that will preſent them ſuch as they be; and look not off till thou haſt ſeen them ſo.

Secondly, So ſee them, as that by ſuch a holy gaze at them, thou may'ſt ſee an utter inſufficiency in thy ſelf to ſatisfie for them.

Thirdly, And ſo ſee them, that thou may'ſt by that ſight behold an abſolute neceſſity of Chriſt to ſuccour thee, and then away ſpeedily to him that can only help thee, and dwell no longer on thy ſins, but go to the throne of Grace, where is plentiful redemption, whence iſſue out pardons in abundance to remove that guilt that ſin hath brought upon thy ſoul; and where is power enough to enable thee to be more than conqueror over thy corruption. Briefly every Soul ſhould ſay thus; It is true Lord, my ſins are many and great, for I have departed from thee the fountain of bliſs: But ſhall I go on, and ſo further from thee, and perſiſt in evil? God forbid. All this while I ſpeak to broken hearted Chriſtians. You prophane ones, you have your portion already, and ſhall have more of it in Hell hereafter; therefore for a while ſtand you by; and let the Children come to their bread.

Iſa 66. 2. opened. *The Lord looks to him that is of an humble and contrite heart, and that trem-*

trembleth before him. A poor creature cannot but obſerve every word of God, and tremble at every truth, whoſe meditation is ſuch as this: Here is Salvation indeed, but it is not mine; here is mercy, but I have no part in ſo great mercy; and thus he ſhakes at every apprehenſion of every word of God, concluding certainly that he ſhall never enjoy any part of it. But mark what the Text ſaith, *The Lord looks at ſuch a trembling Soul*; that is, he caſts ſweet intimations of his goodneſs and love in to him, and ſaith, Thou poor trembling ſinner to thee be it ſpoken, I have an eye towards thee in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Therefore he further ſaith.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, ſpeak comfortably to Jeruſalem, *and cry unto her, that her warfare is accompliſhed, and her iniquity is pardoned: tell* Jeruſalem *ſhe is accepted, tell her what my mind is.* Iſa. 40. 2.

And here he goes on, and ſaith to his Miniſter, ſpeak to the heart of ſuch an humbled Penitential, and tell him from *MEE*, nay tell him from Hea-

ven, and tell him from the Lord Jesus Christ, and from under the hand of the Spirit, that his person is accepted, and his sins are all of them done away, and he himself shined upon in great mercy.

Here *Ephraim* is the picture of a Soul truly humbled, in whose behaviour we may see the behaviour of a true penitent toward God, and Gods dealing towards him. The Text saith, Jer. 31. 18,19,20. *Surely I have heard* Ephraim *bemoaning himself* (there's the heart broken and thirsty) *thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised; turn thou to me, and I shall be turned; thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented, and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh, I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.* Thus the sinner, as if he should have said, I am the wretch that have seen all the means of grace in abundant measure, and yet never profited under the hand of any. The Lord hath corrected me, but I would not be tamed; and he instructed me, but I would

would not learn. Lord turn me, Thou art my God; I have nothing in my ſelf; Nay, now I ſee the evils which before I never perceived; And I obſerve the baſeneſs of my courſe, which before I conſidered not. Now I am aſhamed of my abuſe of grace ſo plainly revealed: I am even now confounded with the ſenſe of thoſe abominations my ſoul did formerly take pleaſure in. This may be conceived to be the mourning of a poor much broken ſinner. And now mark Gods anſwer: *Ephraim is my Son, he is a pleaſant Child: for ſince I ſpake againſt him, I do earneſtly remember him ſtill, therefore my bowels are troubled for him, I will ſure have mercy upon him.* As much as to ſay; I obſerved all thoſe ſecret ſighs, I conſidered all thoſe tears, I heard all thoſe prayers, and take notice of all thoſe complaints, and my bowels even yearn towards this poor dejected ſinner, an humble ſoul that ſeeks to me for mercy. The truth is; I will embrace him with my loving kindneſs. This for the

firſt means of help.

2 Help. Now, The ſecond means of Cure is this, Take heed of judging thy eſtate by carnal reaſon without the rule, which is commonly the faſhion and fault of poor diſtreſſed Spirits, who paſs fearful ſentence againſt themſelves upon groundleſs arguments, and ſay, I never found it, I feel no ſuch thing, and I fear it is not ſo. But in this we hear but carnal pleas, coming out of Satans forge, and by his help, from our ſelves, againſt our ſelves, for we judge our ſelves by them. But I ſay, Take heed of this wile of Satans, and make conſcience of this as much as of any other fault, as much as of ſwearing, ſtealing, whoring, or murder; for this is as truly ſin as thoſe, though not ſo great; yet a far greater ſin than you imagine. Conſider this you humble-hearted Chriſtian, for to thee I ſpeak. Therefore when upon theſe grounds thou concludeſt that thy caſe and eſtate is naught; ſee and conſider againſt how many Commandments thou offendeſt.

The Danger of judging our ſelves raſhly.

eſt. Firſt, Thou diſhonoureſt God, and the work of his grace, by denying that which God hath done for thee: alſo, and ſpeakeſt *unreverently* againſt him; beſides, thou art a murderer, for that thou woundeſt thine own ſoul. Further, Thou robbeſt thy ſelf of much comfort, and ſo art a *Thief*; *and thou beareſt falſe witneſs* againſt thy ſelf, yea, againſt Chriſt, and the Spirit of Chriſt, and the work of grace already wrought in thee. Alſo, thou joyneſt with the devil againſt the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Are theſe no ſins?

But thou wilt ſay, I ſpeak as I think. Yet that hinders not, but that thou beareſt falſe witneſs. As we ſee, if a man affirm ſuch a one is a drunkard, and knows it not, this man bears falſe witneſs, becauſe though the man be indeed a drunkard, yet is it more than he knows. So thou ſay'ſt that thou haſt nothing, when thou doſt but only fear it, and ſuſpect it, and doeſt not feel it. I ſpeak this the rather, becauſe of the ſinful diſtemper that

creeps

creeps in upon the hearts of many broken hearted Chriſtians; and ſo as that out of a ſelf-will'd road of carnal reaſon, and a vile haunt that they have gotten, their hearts are perſwaded that they do well to do ſo, and that they can never be well except they do ſo.

But they that are ſuch (mark what I ſay) when reaſon is plain againſt them, and plain Scripture evidenceth the contrary, do not ſo much attend what the Miniſter ſaith, as they ſtand and invent how they may anſwer the Miniſter; and (ſo) put away their own mercy. Therefore let the fear of God fall upon every poor ſoul that heareth this; and let him know, that howſoever he hath taken or given leave to himſelf, or taken up the waſters, by taking up pleas againſt the truth; yet now he is to change the courſe, to go aſide, and to mourn apart for his miſpriſion: alſo to wonder that the Lord hath not, all this while taken away all the comforts of his grace, and all the motions of his Spirit from him.

The

The Prophet *David* prays the Lord to *turn away his eyes from beholding vanity.* Now if God muſt do that; that is, turn away our eyes that they ſee not; much more muſt he turn away our hearts that they attend not on lying Vanities. We muſt attend God and the voice of his Spirit; but to liſten to carnal pleas (which we have no warrant to do) is to ſin deeply, and to hurt our own ſoul both deeply and dangerouſly. No man would deal with a Cheater. Carnal reaſon is a Cheater, therefore we ſhould not heed it, unleſs we would reſolve to be cozened. And now if the danger of the ſin cannot make us to do this; let the ſorrow that will come of it, conſtrain us. The Prophet ſaith, *Behold, all you that kindle a fire, and that compaſs your ſelves about with the ſparkles that ye have kindled; this ſhall you have at my hand, ye ſhall lye down in ſorrow.* Theſe are the Prophet's words, nay, God's by him. And now I will tell you what is meant by *ſparkles*, and what by *fire*. In the old

Pſal. 119. 37.

Iſa. 50. 11.

old Law (as ſome of you know) there was Heavenly fire kept continually upon the Altar of the Sanctuary, (which ſhadowed out the will and wiſdom of God in his Word,) and there was alſo ſtrange fire, that is, divers ſparkles of mens *own* imaginations and conceits. Concerning this, every poor Creature carries his Tinder-box about him, and is ever kindling of it. But ſuch a fire much provoked God once, and ſo doth ſtill. So ſaith the Text; in which are two things. Firſt, That the heart of man will naturally invent carnal reaſons and pleas againſt it ſelf, and be ſetled upon them as upon the dregs of a veſſel that is at a bottom. Secondly, That the iſſue that followeth is fearful: For it is ſaid, *This ſhall ye have of mine hand, ye ſhall lye down in* your own *ſorrow*. Now then, when the Scriptures are clear, and reaſons upon it evident, yet you will have your own devices and ways; Thus much I muſt tell you, *You ſhall lye down in ſorrow* at laſt, and you may thank your ſelves for it.

Away

Away then with your Tinder-boxes, abaſe your ſelves before the throne of grace, and be at laſt wiſe to Salvation ſo nigh.

Ho, every one that thirſteth (ſaith God by his Prophet) *come and buy without money, take of the well of the water of life, and live for ever freely.* Many a poor Miniſter, while he preaches the good Word of God, would fain leave his commodity behind him, while he ſaith, You muſt have it; and you ſhall have it; it is your portion, and belongs of right unto you. Thus we are fain even to force Gods favour upon you. Hereupon we beſeech you to believe, and we entreat you for the Lord Jeſus ſake to receive mercy, and to humble your hearts.

Thus we deal with you in Fatherly terms. But will you take ſo great and ſo good a commodity from us?

No, Beloved; many ſweet promiſes, and many admirable precious things of grace and ſalvation are revealed, but men are negligent to take

for

for themſelves: in this caſe our markets ſtand upon our ſelves; we paſs not to lay out any thing here to benefit: ſome carnal plea or other marrs all. This argues plainly the ſmall eſtimation that we have of Chriſt. But the poor hungry ſinner, one that is apprehenſive of his own weakneſs and feebleneſs, longs till the *Feaſt-day* cometh, that he may partake of theſe and ſuch delicates. Oh how carefully doth he liſten, and how diligently doth he attend what the Miniſter ſaith? And if the Word come home to his Conſcience, enlightning his heart, and reproving him of his ways: then he cries out; Oh, I am in great trouble; good Lord comfort me: I am full of doubts; good Lord reſolve me: I am ignorant in ſpiritual things; good Lord teach me: I have a proud, ſtout, ſtubborn heart; good Lord humble me. He was never better than now. Therefore take this for a general rule; That a good heart is never better at eaſe than when the Word works moſt, and moſt biting-

ly.

ly. Contrarily, a wicked graceleſs perſon is never better than when the Word works leaſt, or never a whit upon him. But when he thinks the Miniſter will come cloſe to his ſore and ſoul, he will not be at home that day, he will be ſure to be out of the Town, or not in place. He knows the Word would awaken him, and affright him, and he cannot bear the blow, therefore he keeps away, and ſhuns the hearing of the Word, when it ſhould work to his reformation any way.

And now for a third Help, let us be marvellouſly wary and watchful that we enter not into the liſts of any diſpute with Satan, upon points which are beyond the reach of man, as thus to ſay, I am not elected, therefore God will not look upon me to do me any good. Or, it is a vain thing for me to uſe the means of mercy, my time of mercy being out. Oh the days of grace that I have ſeen, when the Lord knocked ſweetly at my heart, and was pleaſed to reveal my ſins unto me at ſuch a time, 3 Help.

time: but then (hard hearted wretch that I was) I ſhut the door upon him, and now he is gone and paſt, and now there is no hope for the viſit of grace, or that Chriſt ſhould return again to ſhew me any mercy. If the Devil can have thee here, all thy comfort is gone; for upon this ground a man ſhall never receive reſt to his Soul, come what days will. And how can he? for if he cannot judge of, or know comfort, how ſhall I the Miniſter be able to give, or he (the hearer) to take it.

And here look as it is with a poor travelling man, one that falleth among thieves, who come and promiſe to carry him a nearer way, but bring him into a wood whither no paſſengers come, and there they do what they will unto him: ſo it is with a poor ſoul, when the Devil gets him into theſe unwarranted diſputes, as it were, large wilderneſſes of Gods eternal counſel, where are no paſſengers, and therefore he cannot but be void of helps and ſuccour, and ſo, as that Satan may now exer-

ciſe

ciſe his full pleaſure, and whole malice by terrifying his poor deſolate ſoul. To avoid which ſtraits, obſerve theſe three Rules.

Firſt, Let the ſoul in this caſe bear upon the Almightineſs of the power of God, who ſaid to *Abraham*, *I am God All-ſufficient.* For if thou be perſwaded of the All-ſufficiency of God, that aſſurance cannot but ſtay thee (ſlipping) from falling. And here remember that God can do more than thou canſt think. He is able, and doth thee good, though thou know it not. And further, conſider that the ſoul cannot doubt of Gods will, but with that very doubt makes ſome queſtion of his power. This for the firſt Rule. 1. Gen. 17.1.

For the ſecond, and ſecondly, it bids check to thine own heart for medling with Gods ſecrets, and for prying ſo into his cloſet of hidden counſels. For no man ſhould go beyond his bounds; and it appertains not to thee to look into this Ark of matters ſealed up. *Secret things belong to God, but revealed things* 2. Deut. 29. 29.

things belong to us. And *who hath known the mind of God?* ſaith *Paul.* Mark this, you that will be climbing up the ladder of Gods eternal Predeſtination, and going up into the skies to know what Gods ſecret mind is. Keep your ſtations wiſely; for neither the divel, nor all the divels in Hell, ever knew the mind of the Lord. When *Jonah* cryed againſt *Nineveh*, ſaying, Within fourty days all you; that is, all you drunkards, and adulterers, and murderers, and others; ſhall be deſtroyed: Mark here how the King reſolves; his words are, *Who can tell if the Lord will repent, and ſtay his fierce wrath that we periſh not?* Therefore when the Devil tells thee thus much, and ſaith, God hath appointed a way to Salvation, and you have had the means, and did not profit by them, therefore God will never ſhew you mercy, nor give you grace. Thus the divel. But how can he tell that? Surely all the devils in Hell cannot tell it; ſay with thy ſelf, Let me walk in that courſe which God hath appointed

1 Cor. 1. 2, 16.

Jonah 4. 19.

pointed and commanded, and do that which I ought; then I may ſay, and with comfort ſay it; Who knows but God may break the heart of a proud, rebellious, contrarying ſinner, ſuch as mine is, and ſuch as I am? None verily but God knows whether or no. The third and laſt Rule follows.

Thirdly therefore, meaſure not the riches of Gods love, and the ſweetneſs of his ſaving grace according to your own conceits; nor do you think that becauſe you cannot conceive it, therefore God will not do it, for *Iſaiah* ſaith, *Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts*; that is, All you wicked ones and you that have lived lewdly, return from your wicked ways, and vain thoughts; and he will abundantly ſhew mercy. 3. Iſa. 51. 7, 8, 9.

But will the Lord pardon all my ſins, ſaith the doubting ſoul: *I cannot think it: If I my ſelf were a god, I ſhould never paſs by ſuch intolerable things as have been done by me.* *Object.*

But I anſwer: Becauſe you cannot, *Anſw.* you

you think God cannot or will not? Yes, saith the Lord, I can abundantly pardon: for my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor my ways as your ways. A poor creature thinks his sins are unpardonable, and that he shall never get assurance of Gods favour or hope of his love. But you are *men* saith the Lord, and have finite thoughts; but I am a *God*, and in mercies infinite, when you think I will have no mercy.

Object. But were ever any such received to mercy as I, saith the drooping Soul and therefore why should I be the only man?

Answ. To this I say: when Christ had wrought many strange miracles, the people said there were never any such things done in *Israel*. And therefore it is plain not to be doubted that God can do things that never like were done: *He doth great things past finding out, and wonderous without number*, saith *Job*: and therefore judge not either Gods power or love by thy scantling. Job 9. 10.

The best Christians are most suspi-

cious

cious of themſelves, and none fuller of doubts and fears, than thoſe that have leaſt cauſe to fear or doubt that their eſtates are broken & bad. Therefore Satan makes it his chief work to grieve and terrifie ſuch. Beſides, their own diſtruſtful hearts are always ready to joyn iſſue with his falſe reports againſt them, raiſing falſe ſurmiſes againſt themſelves, and putting mercy from them; as if they were hired by the Devil to take his part in pleading againſt their own ſure Salvation. Therefore it is worth the time to hear what *David* ſaith, *Pſal.*42. *The Lord ſhall command his loving kindneſs in the morning.* Pſal. 42.8. It is a phraſe taken from *Princes* and great men, whoſe words are a Law of Command. For ſo God will ſend forth, as by a Commandment, his loving kindneſs to a truly humble Chriſtian. As if it ſhould be ſaid: Go, *love* and *everlaſting mercy*, take thy Commiſſion; and I charge thee go to that poor broken hearted ſinner, go to that poor, hungry and thirſty ſoul: go and proſper and prevail and ſtamp

ſtamp my love upon his heart, and there let it ſtand whether he will or no. Thus the Lord charges his loving kindneſs to do good to poor ſinners, and by his own Almightineſs bears up the ſoul, when it is ready to ſink under the weighty burden of its many tranſgreſſions.

Object. But what? ſhall I have mercy? No, no, (ſaith the doubting heart) Will the Lord Jeſus accept me? No ſurely. Could I pray ſo, and ſo, and had I theſe and theſe parts, and could I perform duties after this and this manner, then there were ſome hope, but all is contrary, and therefore wo and alas, there is no mercy for me.

Anſw. But to anſwer this alſo, Let me tell thee, whoever thou art, that God invites thee in particular, as by name, and that all the ſweetneſs in Chriſt, and in his pretious promiſes appertains to thy poor ſoul, and thou haſt as great an intereſt in them as any ſervant of God in the world whatſoever.

No, no, ſaith the trembling ſoul, I

I cannot believe that such a wretch as I, shall, or can go to Heaven. It cannot be. Heaven shall rather fall, than I come there. Thus the discouraged sinner knocks off mercy, and shuts the door against himself.

And now, when all carnal reasonings, and high soaring imaginations (as *Paul* calls them) have raised up strong holds against mercy and comfort; when the Word cannot for the present settle peace in the unquiet Soul; God is made at last to *command* his loving kindness, and send it with a Commission from Heaven; and to say unto it, I charge you break open the doors of such a reluctant sinner, rend of that veil of ignorance that is before his eyes; silence all his doubts and fears: And when this is done, I charge you go home to that broken Soul, and to cheer and refresh it with the sense of my sweet favour; and with the assurance of my love to fill it.

While we were enemies, saith the Apostle, *Christ died for us*. And here the Lord sends from Heaven to a poor Rom. 5. 8.

miserable creature, and saith, Commend my love, commend my mercy to such a distressed soul, and tell it, Though it hath been an enemy to me, yet I am a friend to it. Tell it, Though it hath been a Traytor to me, I have been a good King to it. And tell it, that though it hath been a Rebel to me, I have yet been a loving God to it. Tell the man (whose heart that is) that his sins are pardoned, his person accepted, and that his soul shall be saved. Tell him his sighs and groans are not lost, and that his prayers are heard in Heaven. Let him know that the Lord Jesus dyed for sinners when they were sinners. Make all this good to his Soul, I charge you before you come back. So much for the third help.

4 Help. The fourth Cure is this. And it is specially to be observed by a Christian above all, in his proceedings with himself in Bar of Judgment; and that is: Pass no hasty sentence against thy self, but according to the evidence of the Word. If thou art to be approved, let the Word of God

do

do it: and let the ſame word examine thee, if thou comeſt to be examined. If this Word ſpeak for thee, no matter, though all men and Angels ſpeak againſt thee, and if it condemn thee, no matter who ſpeaks for thee: By it, thou riſeſt or falleſt to thine own Maſter. What though ſome wrangling fellow ſtep in, and will be determining cauſes before the Judge comes: ſhall his word ſtand? No: therefore a wiſe man will ſtay till the Judge himſelf do come, and wait upon the judgment of his mouth. Deal thou no otherwiſe with thine own ſoul: put not the caſe to be tryed by a company of peeviſh carnal reaſons, but ſtay till the Word (which is the Judge) come; and judge thy ſelf by that, and hold to that for thy life, and the life of thy Soul. *The light is that which manifeſteth all things*, ſaith the Apoſtle. His meaning is: The light of the Word, and the evidence of Gods truth, manifeſted to the Souls of Gods people; Theſe properly are the Judge: the other are but Eph. 4. 13.

wrangling caſes, not to be admitted. And here ſenſe and feeling, grounded upon carnal matter, are like foggs and miſts which make a man in caſe that he cannot ſee his way; but upon clearing up his ſtate and condition is open before him; and then it is manifeſt what it is. *Learn of me* (ſaith our Saviour) *and you ſhall find reſt to your Souls:* And the Pſalmiſt ſaith, *I will enquire what the Lord will ſay,* So ſay thou, I will not hearken what carnal reaſon will ſay; I will hear what God ſaith. The want of this, is the cauſe why we have ſo many diſtractions and diſquiets, and why we are ſtill in our doubtings; ev[illegible] becauſe he that teacheth, and can perſwade with us, is a deluder.

Mat. 11. 29

And hereof it is, that the poor ſoul ſaith: What? ſhall I have an intereſt in Chriſt? ſhall I have a title to the promiſes? Nay, this belongs to thoſe that are broken hearted. Indeed if I had ſuch power againſt corruption, ſuch heavenly mindedneſs, and this and that precious grace, there were

were ſome hope; but I am ſo full of weakneſs, and many times led captive by ſuch a rebellious heart, that it is too apparent I never had ſaving grace: nay, I fear I never ſhall have it truly wrought in my ſoul.

This you ſay, poor Soul: But who told you ſo; and where learned you that Religion? I am ſure you never learned it of Chriſt. For who or what word tells you, if I have ſuch a load of corruptions, I ſhall never have grace? not the word of Chriſt, I am ſure: wherefore I charge you hold to the truth of the Word: Learn of *me*, ſaith *Chriſt*, and put not your cauſe to be decided by carnal Reaſon; neither regard what it telleth you: for if you take that way and turn not back, you can never come to Chriſt, no way to him that way. Learn of the Lord Chriſt, (for his Word is faithful, and his Promiſe ſure) and there you ſhall find a Tower of reſt as ſtrong as Mount *Sion*. It is that Word whereby we ſhall be judged at the laſt great day, when ſenſe and

feeling ſhall be caſt over the bar for deceivers and never come into Court again. And thus much of the four cures: it reſts that I now propound four Rules, by which a man may know how to order himſelf, and ſo to walk, that he may keep a ſtraight courſe by the Word, and not turn aſide to one hand, or other, from that guide of his way. And thus walking, he may get into his hands the evidences that can aſſure him of a reſt perpetual, and eſtabliſh his mind with perfect peace. For they work none iniquity, that walk in this way.

Rules to direct a Chriſtian how to uſe the Word of God for his evidence, or aſſurance with peace.

Rule. 1. The firſt of theſe Rules teacheth to uſe the word of God aright: for as thou muſt in all things that concern thy Soul repair to the Word; ſo thou muſt conſider thine own uprightneſs by it, and ſee what work is in thy Soul that is able to anſwer the Word, and to teſtifie that

the work of grace is there. And here be sure to take thy soul at the best: do not always pore upon the worst that is in it, nor upon thy failings, nor that that can only accuse thee; but if there be any thing there that may justly speak for thee, neglect not that. It is an injustice for any Court to hear one side and not another. The Scripture is a Text of Justice, and the Lord doth not lye at catch with his Children, but takes them at the best: as *Rom.* 4. 22. it is therefore said that *Abraham believed the promise, and it was imputed to him for righteousness.* Indeed, as in the 12. of *Gen.* he had some doubtings; but God took him at the best: and speaks this of his Faith. So *Sarah* is spoken of, as of a gracious Woman, and of a pattern for women, by calling her Husband *Lord*; which was a sign of reverence to her Husband, and an humble heart to the Lord: and yet we read that she derided the Message of the Lord by the Angel: the Lord buries that, and only speaks of that which was to

1 Pet. 3 6. Gen. 18. 12.

her commendation, and ſo took her at her beſt too. Now as the Lord dealt with theſe, ſo ſhould we with our ſelves: whatſoever is found ſincere and upright in us, that ſhould we obſerve, as well as that which is not ſo; nay, that rather and before the other. If a man ſhould have his cauſe handled in any Court of Juſtice after this faſhion; namely, that (there) ſhould only be obſerved what is failing in the cauſe, and never that, that makes for it; the beſt cauſe that is might go to ground: therefore the Court will hear all read: as every Bond or Bill that ſhall come in; and every matter of agreement; briefly, every thing: the cry will be, Let all be read. Again, ſuppoſe a man have a bond or other inſtrument in Court, and that the Lawyer only doth open and read the failings in it, and that which ſeems to make againſt the party: If the Judge only hear that, how can it but go againſt that ſide? Therefore that party ſaith, Good my Lord hear all. Now when all is read: thoſe defects are corrected, and the

the cauſe goes well, which had not been ſo, if that Bond, or Deed, or other Inſtrument had been read to halves, not throughly. So when men ſhall bring in ſo many and main Indictments againſt themſelves, and ſay, Oh what pride and ſtubbornneſs is in my heart! Oh how weak am I, and dull, and dead, and backward to holy duties! Oh how careleſs of enjoying communion with God! how negligent in ſifting and trying my own heart, in watching over my ſenſes, and mourning in ſecret for my daily failings! Though this were ſo, yet if men will ſee no more (and theſe too much) no marvel if they trouble their own houſe, or if Satan by their own words judge them. To ſuch an one therefore I ſay, All that thou ſayeſt may be true, but art thou not troubled with theſe failings? and are they not the greateſt griet that thy ſoul hath? Yea, ſaith the poor ſoul, I confeſs my heart is vexed, and my Soul grieved for them; and I could be content to be any thing that I could not

be ſo. Now hear on this ſide, and take the beſt. For, as it is with a mans hand and the ſtaff, ſo it is here. I compare the promiſe to a ſtaff: you know the back of a mans hand cannot take hold of the ſtaff; but the palm of his hand can. So turn thou the right ſide of thy Soul to the promiſe, and then thou may'ſt take by it: but we take not by it, becauſe we turn the back ſide of our hearts to the promiſe: for then, the Soul ſaith, Oh my ſtubbornneſs is great, and mine inabilities grievous, and corruptions many. But this is the wrong ſide; which will ever hinder thee from taking hold of the promiſe. But turn to the right ſide, and then ſay, My Soul hates theſe, and my Soul is right weary of them. Oh this is the right ſide; turn to that, and thou art well. This for the firſt Rule.

Rule 2. Now for the Second, and ſecondly, Labour to have thy Conſcience ſetled and eſtabliſhed in that truth which now out of the Word thou haſt gotten to bear witneſs of the work

work of grace in thee. For if there be any want of the assurance of Gods love, and if the evidence of the work of grace come not roundly in, but there be some guilt of sin still remaining; Conscience will make new stirs, and breed new broils, and continually move and unquiet the heart: therefore as it is good to have our judgment informed by the Word, when we see the good that is in us; so it is meet we should make conscience perswaded of it, so as Conscience may speak for us, and all be made straight. Otherwise, as the debtor that is indebted to many creditors if he agree not with all, or with all save one; that one may come upon him as well as all the rest: so for the poor distressed soul that lies at the mercy of the Lord, and is so deep in arrearages to the Law, that he cannot wind out; if he labour not to still Conscience, and what is else against him, in every point as well as in some; if he leave one undischarged, that one may set his conscience against him, as well as an hundred.

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The want of this, is cauſe why new Suits and new Bills are daily put in againſt us: only becauſe Conſcience is not pacified, nor all quieted. And now take a poor ſinner that hath all his doubts and objections anſwered, come to him, and ſay, Are all theſe all your doubts and objections? he will ſay, Yea. And are they all anſwered? here he will ſay, Yea too. And have you now any thing to ſay againſt that which hath been made known unto you? No not now. But ſay to him again, Did your Conſcience ſay to you, It is a ſin to ſay you have no grace? here he demurs, and ſtops, and ſays, No, I dare not ſay ſo, but I rather ſay the contrary. And now mark what he ſays: All the Books are croſt, and all objections anſwered, and yet Conſcience puts in a new plea, becauſe haply it was not ſatisfied to the full, and in every parcel of aberration.

And now come to him again, and ſay, You are ſometimes captived by ſin, are you not? And are you

you willing to be at Gods free dispose, and that he should pluck away all your corruptions, as it were shackles from you, are you not?

Oh, saith the poor sinner, I must needs yield to that. Then I affirm to thy Soul, that this is a work of true grace. Here (therefore) let Conscience be fully satisfied. But how satisfied? Thus: Cancel all self accusations, and this will cut all scores, and clear the heart, scattering all clouds that mist it. This will cast out all cavils, and all new Bills against us: *For, if our Consciences condemn us not, then we have boldness towards God.* We must then stop the mouth of Conscience; that is, be convinced, and agree, that it is a sin to say, God hath not wrought this work of grace in the heart, when it is so clear he hath. For though sense and feeling be (as it sometimes will be) gone, yet conscience remembers the day and year when the sinner had a clear evidence of Gods love, and therefore saith, Lord thou knowest it, and thou didst say out of thy word

Word at ſuch a time, that the heart of this poor ſoul was upright and ſincere before thee.

And here it ſhould be with a poor ſinner, as with a wiſe man, when he would make his lands ſure unto him and his poſterity by evidences and writings ſealed: he is not content here only to have his evidences in his own keeping, but will have them inrolled in Chancery, ſuch a year, and ſuch a day: that if he ſhould loſe his Deeds, he might be ſure where to find them. So it ſhould be with the diſtreſſed Soul; it ſhould not only be willing to have all objections to the contrary of it anſwered; but it ſhould further get them recorded in the Court of Conſcience, as in Chancery; that when ſenſe and feeling are loſt, yet it may readily go to that high Court of Conſcience, and there find the day and year when Gods love was made ſure unto it. This for the ſecond Rule.

Rule 3. For the third: Thirdly, We ſhould ſtrive, and that mightily, to have our hearts over-powered with the evidence

dence that Reaſon and Conſcience make good unto us; that ſo we may quietly receive, and calmly welcom it; yea, and yield and ſubject our hearts to the truth of it. But here we all ſtick: and there are three things in the Soul of a man; three, I ſay, that abet all theſe quarrels and oppoſitions againſt the evidences of the Word in that man. The firſt: for 1. Reaſon objects. 2. The ſecond: then Conſcience accuſeth. And the third: 3. The will of man will not ſubmit. And here we find by experience, that when a man hath ſtilled Conſcience, and ſilenced all reaſons to the contrary of his peace; yet ſuch is the Iron of a ſtubborn heart, that nothing can bar it; but ſtill it maintains, and will, ſome gainſaying and ſome new quarrels againſt the truth and it ſelf. Beſides, it keeps on foot even that that hath been long ago anſwered, and let down: nay, that a man would think had been buried in a deep grave (as deep as Hell) never to riſe again. Now in this caſe it is with a poor ſin-

ſinner, as with a man that hath a contentious adverſary. Haply the cauſe that they two have in hand, hath been tryed in all Courts of Law, and at laſt comes to the Chancery: And there it is concluded againſt the cavilling Adverſary, as in the other Courts; there all matters are as well ſtated and ordered as a man would wiſh, and as an honeſt man would grant: Yet will not this man, that is ſo contentious, be ſo concluded, or ſo yield, but will to the Law again with a back-Suit, and then, and upon that old grudge, ſtake down all he hath, and ſell all to his ſhirt. His will he will have, whatever it coſt him. Nor will he give over, till the Judge doth come to take notice of him, and ſo to caſt out his Cauſe with himſelf, whom therefore he commits to priſon, and ſaith, Sirrah, theſe matters were (all of them) long ago anſwered & will you trouble us again, not with new matters, but with old quarrels?

Juſt ſo it is with the heart even of a gracious man ſometimes, and one

one that is humbled in ſome meaſure; and could be content to yield to the commanding power of Gods Word, and to the witneſs of his own Conſcience: and therefore ſaith, My condition is better than I thought it was; yet there is an old proud, ſelf-will'd heart ſtill in me; an heart that will not be quieted nor ſaid unto; but ſtill will be quarrelſome, and maintain the old exception. For though all reaſons are well confuted, and Conſcience bears witneſs it is ſo; and the Miniſter, as the Judge under Chriſt, caſts out the Cauſe: yet (obſerve it) the poor diſtreſſed ſinner will keep the old road of objecting againſt himſelf: And though he hath been anſwered fully, and to every point, not many hours before; yet he keeps old matters ſtill freſh, and out of the Salt, till they yield a foul ſcent to all that come within the hearing of them. And thus, even when a man would think he ſhould not dare to come in Court with ſuch old caſhiered ſtuff; yet that proud ſelf-will'd heart will be doing

doing ſtill; nor will yield or give over. Have we not juſt cauſe then to labour our hearts ſo far as to get them over-powered with the authority of the truth concerning whatſoever God reveals to them for their good? Oh therefore, poor ſoul, do not reject the evidence which God makes known, and paſſeth upon thee for thy ſure welfare eternally. Do not, becauſe thou haſt not that comfort that thou would'ſt, reject all; as if thou would'ſt have none at all. So then the fault here is not properly becauſe thou canſt not, but becauſe thou wilt not receive the promiſe: and this is that that ſo wracks and torments thy Spirit; this is that which breeds the quarrel ſo hard to be compounded; and hence it is, that when Reaſon is ſatisfied, and Conſcience convinced, yet the ſoul is perplexed ſtill. For put this queſtion to it, and ſay unto it; Are you perſwaded that the Lord hath done you this good, that he will ſhew an everlaſting mercy to your ſoul? and it will ſay No; and that all the world

world ſhall not perſwade it of that. Miniſters are merciful (will ſuch a diſtempered ſoul ſay) and Chriſtians are charitable, and loth to diſpleaſe too much, or to diſcourage one in my caſe, or do to me as I ſhould do to them: but did they know me indeed, they would never think thus of me: certainly I ſhall never find it ſo. What? have I grace? all the World ſhall never perſwade me to it. Mark what I ſay: This is meerly thy pride and ſelf-willedneſs, that will not receive that good which God is willing to give thee. But repent, or this pride of thy peeviſh heart will coſt thee dear, one day; I wiſh not.

But ſome will ſay, How can you make this pride? we are ever complaining of, and condemning our ſelves; And can this be pride? *Object.*

Yes, I ſay, (and mark what I ſay) it is intolerable pride againſt the Majeſty of Heaven: and this I make good by theſe two things. For, firſt, for a man to follow his own conceits and ſelf-willedneſs againſt *Anſw.*

againſt the truth, the force of reaſon, and the witneſs of the ſervants of God, and his own Conſcience; cannot but be pride.

Secondly, And for a man, becauſe he hath not what he would, to be (therefore) off the hinges ſo, as to throw away all Gods kindneſs, and to deny the grace that is given him: and this becaule he cannot be Conqueror as he deſires; is not this pride? That meaſure of mercy which God hath already ſhewed to thy Soul, is incomprehenſible, beyond mans reach; and yet becauſe thou canſt not have what thou would'ſt, thou wilt have nothing at all. Juſt as if a man that hath the Law on his ſide, and his eſtate ſetled on him, ſhould, becauſe his evidences are not written in great golden Letters, nor in the largeſt Royal Paper, throw all away. This is your caſe: for ſo you, becauſe you have not ſo much of grace, or with ſuch a ſweetneſs as you would, you deny you have any. But have you no humility, becauſe none to your mind, or not ſo much, or

or not in ſuch manner as you require? Oh pride; and pride in the higheſt degree!

Theſe things conſidered, labour to bring your hearts more down in a holy ſubjection to Gods meaſure and time. And think it your duty, as well to receive comfort when God offers it upon good terms, as to do any duty commanded. And know that it is as truly a ſin (though of a bigger ſize) to reject mercy when God offers it, as to kill a man, which God hath forbidden. I ſay, Not as much; for I know there is odds in the degree. Therefore you (the Saints of God) that have been thus peſtered, and thus poſſeſt to become your own enemies; remember (when your hearts begin thus to ſlide away) to take your hearts unto you, and not to give them the reins at ſuch deſperate concluſions againſt God and Conſcience. Deal better with your ſouls, and ſay, Good Lord, this is the proud unyielding diſtemper of this vile heart of mine. For, what would I have? Is not Gods Word clear

clear in this point, and my conſcience ſatisfied? Do not the Miniſters of God affirm my ſtate to be good? and ſhall I thus diſhonour God, and ſlight them?

Object. But what ſaith the poor Soul to this? Muſt I eat mine own words? Muſt I ſay and unſay? ſay I have grace, when before I ſaid, I had none?

Anſw. Yes and be thankful too to God that you may ſay ſo. Is it not better for you to croſs your own fleſh, than to croſs Gods Spirit? Take notice of this, and fear leſt that proud and peeviſh Soul of yours (which now refuſeth conſolation when God offers it) be forced to fare as a man that eats his own fleſh, and ſo to come upon her knees for comfort, and get none to her dying day. For though God will ſave you at laſt, yet (mean while) you ſhall have an Hell upon Earth before this be.

One would have thought it had been great humility in *Peter* to refuſe to let Chriſt *waſh his feet*; but it was no ſuch matter. Indeed nothing leſs;

leſs; therefore Chriſt takes him up roundly for it (which is indeed, the only way to cure ſuch a diſtemper as this) *If I waſh thee not, thou haſt no part in me.* If you will needs have your own way, and humour your ſelf, and will not be perſwaded; you may go down to Hell in the mind. *Peter* might have pauſed here, and taken breath; but did not: his ſtout ſtomach quickly came down, and he preſently ſaid, Then, *Lord, not only my feet, but my hands, and head*; and all. It is the humility of a good heart, to take what God offers. Moſt Chriſtians think they are humble hearted, when yet they are ſo far proud, as to give way to this ſullen diſpoſition. Therefore labour to over-maſter this over ſoaring heart of thine, with the authority of the Word of God; and be ſure to receive mercy while God offers it, leſt he draw in, and take away the comfort of his Spirit from thee, and make thee go howling and roaring to thy grave. Though he bring thee to Heaven in the end; yet thou may'ſt have John 13. 8, 9.

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an uncomfortable Hell before thou comeſt thither.

Rule 4. So for the third Rule, the laſt followeth. The laſt Rule is this: Maintain the good work which thy heart hath ſubmitted unto, and keep it as the beſt thing in thy houſe, and (of treaſure) the beſt under Heaven. And then, when thou haſt by it obtained certain evidence that thy eſtate is good; hear nothing againſt it, but ſtick faſt to it, as to thy life. Regard nothing (what is not in the Word) to the contrary of that evidence of thy Salvation; that I mean, which thou haſt been perſwaded of by the Word of truth. And here, if Satan or carnal reaſon have any thing to ſay againſt thee, let them bring Scripture, and then yield to it in the true ſenſe; but without the Word hear nothing. Look as it is with a man that is at Law for Lands; if he have his adverſary on the hip, and have gotten ſome advantage againſt him, he will keep him there and hold him to the point. So do thou in a better caſe. For, if a man will follow every

very wrangling Lawyer at every impertinent quillet or out-leap, he muſt never look for an end of lawing: and it is the faſhion of many Atturneys, rather to breed quarrels, than to kill them in the conception. So in this caſe, he that will quarrel where he may reſolve, ſhall never have done. And therefore hold to the main point. Deal with Satan as with a ſubtil adverſary that is full of wiles and fetches. It is the cunning of the enemy to lead you aſide: and he will have many vagaries (if you be in a good Way) to bring you out: But be ſure to hold to that truth which you have received from the evidence of the Word, and the witneſs of Conſcience. When a man hath gotten ſome comfort, then the Devil begins to play the Lawyer in this or the like manner.

How the Soul being tempted may anſwer Satans accuſations.

Doeſt thou not ſee how weak and poor thou art? how deſtitute of all *Sinner.*

ſaving grace, and how contrary thou walkeſt to God?

Sinner. It is true (ſaith the Soul) yet it is as true that he that confeſſeth and forſaketh his ſin ſhall find mercy.

Satan. But (ſaith the Devil) doeſt thou not ſee that thou art full of pride and weakneſs, and ſecretly unwilling to come to duties?

Sinner. It is true (ſaith the Soul) I am ſo, yet I hate and deſire to forſake this way, and therefore ſhall find mercy; the Word ſaith ſo.

Satan. But (ſaith the Devil) are you of Gods counſel? ſecret things belong to God.

Sinner. Indeed (ſaith the Soul) I know not what Gods ſecret will is; yet that I know, that the Word ſaith; which is, *He hath no pleaſure in the death of a ſinner*, but invites ſuch daily to come unto him.

Satan. But (ſaith the Devil) many cozen themſelves: mercy is as a black Swan, a rare bird, and few obtain it:

it: and why (then) may not you be cozened as well as others?

But (saith the Soul) the Lord will not cozen me, and the Lord knows my heart; and the Word knows what the Lord knows. *Sinner.*

But (saith the Devil) may not you be deceived in the letter of the word? the Word is true indeed; but how know you that you rightly apply it, and that the Word and your Heart sute together? *Satan.*

Why (saith the Soul) I desire as earnestly to have my sin purged, as I do to have it pardoned. I know my Heart by the Word, and to the Word I repair; and the Lord knows that I hate all sin inwardly, and reform it outwardly, to my weak power; and therefore I know I shall find mercy. Shew me a place of Scripture that saith I do not rightly apply the Word, and I believe it; but I will not believe thee; for thou art as thou wast from the beginning, a lyer. Thus hold to the Word, and the Devil will be tired weary and leave thee; keep you *Sinner.*

here, for if he catch you a wandring after sense and feeling, you are gone. The Prophet saith: *Thou through thy Commandments hast made me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me.* Satan is wise by long experience; and the flesh, and carnal reason, and the world are wise too: but blessed be our God that makes every poor ignorant servant of his, wiser than all these. But how? the word must ever be in your hands, and the meditation of it in your hearts: it must be always with you; and you must keep it with you daily: for that will make you not to know only what is amiss, but to get ground against corruption, and whatsoever else may hinder your peace with God and with your selves.

Psal. 119. 98.

Satan deals in this case with the Soul, as the enemies in War: when *Joshua* defeated the men of *Ai*, he got them out of the City; and then they that lay in ambush went and took it, and burnt it with fire. So the Devil doth. Our Castle or City

Josh. 8. 19.

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is the Promiſes, the Word and Ordinances of God: Now if the Devil can but get you out of this Caſtle, he hath you where he would: if you will look after every bird that flies, and liſten after every word of carnal reaſon and temptation that comes, you are gone: If he can get you from the ſure Hold of the promiſe, he will entangle you in his ſnare of unbelief, and ſo prevail againſt you.

Little Children, if ye abide in Gods Commandments, ye abide in God, ſaith the Apoſtle. As if he had ſaid, Children, your enemies are many, and great, and cunning, therefore keep home, and within the walls of your ſure hope, and then you are well, whatſoever weather is up. It is the faſhion of Parents, if their Children run abroad and catch a knock, to tell them that they are well enough ſerved; you might have kept at home when you had warning. So here. 1 John 2. 28.

The iſſue of the point is this: Judge thy Soul by the Word and look upon that ſacred Piece in the glaſs of it.

it ſelf: And here, let it bear witneſs for thee: and what the Word of God doth evidence to thee, that do thou maintain, and hear nothing againſt it. This is the way to receive conſtant comfort, and the way to go on chearfully in thy Chriſtian courſe. Let quarrels, troubles, and temptations come, yet keep thoſe within doors, and reſt thy ſelf upon the riches of that grace that is in Chriſt Jeſus. Then you may be for ever comforted, and go ſinging to Heaven and merrily to your graves, though you meet with never ſo many temptations and oppoſitions, croſſing your way.

Now follow ſome means to obtain an intereſt in the Promiſes.

It reſteth that I ſhew you ſome means whereby a man may ſo improve his time, that at laſt he may obtain this bleſſed eſtate of being merry in the Lord. The means are four. But before I begin with them, you muſt firſt know, that we may uſe

uſe the means, and yet find no means under Heaven to do it, except God ſtrike the ſtroke. You muſt therefore wait upon God, and the Spirit of God in the uſe of the means for this matter, by believing rightly to your aſſurance. For, ſo the Text ſaith, *To you it is given to believe*; it muſt be given therefore: and Faith is the free gift of God. It is God then that muſt do it; who yet will not do it without us, being reaſonable men and women in the power of willing. Again, the Lord affords us means; yet not to uſe them, and give him the ſlip. And here it is a good ſaying; Let the Lord do what he will, and let us do what we ſhould. We muſt not think when we have the means, that we can get Faith preſently: for, as *Paul* ſaith, *The ſame power that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead, muſt make us able to believe*; or elſe all the Angels in Heaven, and all the Miniſters on earth, and all the help that men and means can give us, will do us no good. Now the means are of divers kinds: as, hearing, Eph. 1. 19.

and Prayer, and Sacraments, which are the Conduits from which God communicates Faith. But I let them paſs, and faſten upon thoſe which are needful for feeble Chriſtians to the bringing of them into this bleſſed eſtate of rightly believing. And theſe are ſuch as follow.

I. *Means.* Firſt, We muſt, as much as in us lies, labour to pull away all thoſe carnal outward ſtays that the Soul leans upon, and all other like ſuccours, and whatſoever contentment it is, which a poor ſinner doth betake himſelf to as to his refuge, for relief and help; that when all theſe are taken from us, we may be forced to go for ſuccour thither, where right ſuccour is to be had. It is a thing natural to us all; even from our firſt Parents; a deſire to have the ſtaff in our own hands, and to be able to ſupply our ſelves of all neceſſaries, without being beholden to others, or to any.

Now therefore the way to make the Soul to lean upon Chriſt, is, to pluck away all thoſe deceiving props.

props. The laſt thing we flye unto, is the Promiſe; which if we could find good any where elſe than in Chriſt, we would never go to him for it. God hears laſt of us; and therefore here we ſhould do with our ſelves, as the enemy doth with a City beſieged, when he would make the Inhabitants, or thoſe that keep it, to yield; The way he takes is to famiſh them, to cut off all proviſion, and ſtop all paſſages ſo as that none can come to relieve them; then they preſently yield themſelves to the mercy of the Aſſailant: ſo it is with our nature; and ſeeing it is ſo that we are ſtill truſting to our own ſtrengths, and relying upon ſomething of our own, the beſt way were to famiſh the heart by cutting off all the means and comforts whereby the ſame is ſuccoured, and quieted; but not rightly in Chriſt. For when the heart is thus famiſhed, it will then ſeek out to a Saviour, and there be, becauſe there is no other thing or means otherwiſe to help it.

Mat. 5. 26, 27. The poor woman in the Goſpel had ſpent all her goods upon the Phyſitians; and if ſhe had had but a little means left, yea, but one farthing token (for any thing I know, or doth appear) ſhe would never have gone to Chriſt: But when all theſe failed, then ſhe was forced to ſeek to Chriſt, that was ready and willing to do that for her, and more than ſhe deſired. Our Souls muſt have ſomething to bear upon; and they cannot ſubſiſt without ſome under-props. Hereupon therefore, when all our carnal hopes are taken from us, we ſtay (as we muſt needs) upon the Promiſe, becauſe we have nothing elſe to reſt upon. Yet it is not required (though I thus ſpeak) that a man ſhould caſt away all outward comforts, ſuch as God affords him for the interim here, Oh no: but only this; That (though he have much this way) yet that he labour to get his heart to ſee and acknowledge the inſufficiency and nothingneſs of them all, till he have the ſuperlative comfort, Chriſt, above

bove all; and not to repoſe in them (having them) as ſome do, making them our whole contentment, and ſole reſt: For then they are but lying vanities, and broken ſtaves, which will not only cozen us, but pierce us too, and that deeply.

And now when the Soul ſeeth that theſe things cannot ſuccour it, but lay it in worſe caſe; a man will then be content to have his heart divorced from them. And here it is with the Soul as it was with *Noah's Dove*, when the Ark began to reſt upon the Mountain of *Ararat*: *Noah* then ſent out the Dove; but the Dove *found no reſt for the ſole of her foot*. No queſtion there were many dead carcaſes to ſettle upon; but the Dove found no reſt, till ſhe came to the Ark again. So when a man finds no reſt in any thing the creature affords, and can get no footing for the Soul there to ſtay it ſelf upon; then it betakes it ſelf to Chriſt the Ark, and goes home to the promiſe, and reſts there, and expects from thence what is needful

for

for it. As (therefore) in the Art of Swimming; he that will ſwim, muſt pluck his feet from the bottom, and commit himſelf to the ſtream to bear him up: ſo in this our purpoſe to Heaven, we muſt draw our hearts from theſe vain things below, and theſe from them; and though we have honour and preferments, yet we muſt put no confidence in them, but pluck our affections, as it were feet from them, and learn by our believing to commit our ſelves wholly to the power of the promiſe, and thence to receive comfort, and permanent abiding.

Let not the gods of this world, then, as Honour, and Profit, and Pleaſures, deceive thee. Did the pride of *Pharaoh*'s heart deliver him? Did the riches of the rich man in Hell ſave him? Did *Herod*'s applauſe that he had, do him any good? Did theſe gods ſecure them? nay, have they not left them in the lurch? Therefore let us take our hearts off from theſe things, and (in compariſon to thoſe of our better life) have a

baſe

baſe eſteem of them, and ſee ſo great a vanity, and emptineſs, and inſufficiency in them all, that we may be forced to ſeek to Chriſt, and ſay as *David*, *Help, Lord; for vain is the help of man.* Labour we further to ſee the privy pranks of our own hearts, and to hunt out all thoſe mazes, and turnings and windings of our ſubtle Souls: for here, it is wonderful to ſee how the Soul is ready to hang her comforts upon every hedge, and to ſhift and ſhark in every by-corner for them. Now when thou ſeeſt thy heart thus ſeeking comfort in vain helps, call it from them, and them pluck away, and up by the roots, and ſee the emptineſs of them: then will thy heart be fit and ready to make out to Chriſt. And this for the firſt means.

Secondly, Therefore when this is done, there is in ſome part, ſome way made for the Promiſe to come into thy Soul; therefore labour thou in the ſecond place, to have thy heart poſſeſſed thorowly, and perſwaded effectually of the fulneſs of that good

good which is in the promiſe, and of that ſatisfactory mercy and freeneſs of the grace that is in Chriſt; ſo that the Soul may be eſtabliſhed with that full content which is to be had in the riches of the promiſe. But mark what I ſay; Let us perſwade our hearts firſt; and not content our ſelves that we are able to diſpute ſomewhat fully of the excellency of the promiſe, and of thoſe riches in it, through the free grace of God in Chriſt. For, what is it to purpoſe that the heart knows this, and knowing it, to be ſo fore-ſtall'd, that it can never come to the promiſe? Therefore leave not thy heart till it come to value the promiſe by that that the Word ſpeaketh of it in a true account. I ſay, Leave not thy heart, till thou ſee the promiſe of grace moſt beautiful in thine eye, and that thy heart may get ſome earneſt touching the goodneſs of God, and the riches of his grace towards thee by the ſame. And here bring thy heart to know and ſee, that the promiſe is better than all the riches and honours

honours that thou canſt have, or the world can beſtow: for ſo we read, *They that* know thee, *will truſt in thee; for thou Lord haſt never failed them that ſeek thee.* If thou knoweſt, and wilt believe this, this kind of knowledge and perſwaſion cannot but breed confidence and reſolution, and (conſequently) quiet the heart. We dare truſt a friend whoſe faithfulneſs we have tried; and we reſt upon that which we know by the ſure card of experience. The promiſes of God are (all of them) as true as Goſpel. Seek from one end of the Heaven to the other; turn all the Bible over, and ſee if ever any man leaned on the promiſe, and the Lord did not perform what he had promiſed for the good of his Soul. *Except the* Lord *had been my delight, I ſhould have periſhed in my troubles,* (ſaith *David,*) *My fleſh faileth, and my heart alſo; but thou art the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* But here lies a great matter, a work of marvellous difficulty and great neceſſity; and therefore, that thy heart

Pſal. 9. 10.

Pſal. 119. 92.

Pſal. 73. 26.

heart may sit down satisfied with the sufficiency of the Promise, I will propound three Rules how the Promise may be improved and conduce to thy singular benefit here and hereafter.

Rule 1. How to improve the promises for our benefit.

For the first of these Rules: Labour daily to present thy Soul a greater good in the Promise, than thou canst see any where else. It is a mans skill, (and it should be his endeavour) daily to dog his heart, and to look what it is that the heart desires most; and accordingly to present the greatest good unto it. And what may that be? even that which hath more of contentment in it, than any thing else in the world. And here, we should deal with our hearts, as men will with a corrupt Justice, when he would have him to be on his side: there, the only way is to bribe him: but though this be sinful in this case, yet it is good to bribe (as it were) the corrupt heart with the goodness of the Promise, that so the heart may cleave to it, and long after it. Do honours,

nours, or riches, or the applauſe of men, or any earthly pleaſures offer thee content and ſatisfaction? then perſwade thy heart there is a greater worth in the Promiſe, than can be had in all them. For here is *an exceeding weight of glory:* and he that hath it ſhall be made a *King*, and ſhall have that glory that will *never fade*. Further, doth thy heart hanker after earthly joy and mirth? thou ſhalt find more joy in the Promiſe, than in the cracking of theſe thorns. Doth thy heart hanker after riches? tell thy heart that there are *unſearchable riches in Chriſt*, and that through him, we have title to all the Promiſes of this life and a better. We know that he that offers moſt for the bargain hath it: therefore we ſhould obſerve the goings out of our hearts, and what offers are made to give them the beſt content, and with ſuch to preſent them. This the Promiſe doth; and this with a greater good in God, than in all things in the world beſide. Therefore; *Oh the height and depth,*

and

and length and breadth of the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledge!

The conſideration of ſo much, ſhould not only work a longing after Chriſt, and the promiſe; but fill our faces with ſhame and confuſion, that ever we ſhould ſet ſo light by ſuch riches of mercy, and walk unworthy of ſo great Salvation. Could we comprehend the unmeaſurable dimenſions of Gods love and goodneſs revealed in his Word; Oh how would our hearts be enflamed towards him? When the ſinner thinks thus with himſelf; I that have done all that I could againſt ſo good a God, that my heart even bleeds to think of it, there was no name under Heaven that I tore in pieces more or ſo much as Gods name; his *wound* and *life* and *heart-blood* I have rent and torn a thouſand times. Nay, there was no command in the world that my Soul ſo much deſpiſed, as the command of the Lord Jeſus. There was no ſpirit that ever ſpake to me, which I ſo much reſiſted, as the Spirit of the Almighty.

Oh

Oh how many ſweet motions hath the Lord let into my Soul, thereby to force me from my courſes ſo baſe, and practices ſo ſinful? By how many mercies hath he allured me, by how many gracious promiſes hath he invited me; by how much of his goodneſs provoked me to forſake my ſins, and to turn unto him? But I have flown in the face of his *Miniſters*, and *bleſſed Spirit*, and rejected all tearms of reconciliation. If I had lien in a dungeon, and been plagued with torments all my life time, yea, though I could have had another world full of miſery to live in, I ſhould count it infinite mercy, ſo the Lord would paſs by my ſinful miſcarriages, and pardon theſe inward inſurrections.

But that God ſhould ſend his deareſt *Son* to love me, and that ſo incomparably and ſo unconceivably as that I could not poſſibly hate him ſo much, as he loved and affected me; that I could not ſo exceed in unkindneſs towards him, as he hath exceeded in tender kindneſs towards me;

What

What a love is this? What unkindneſs for ſo great love? Were it not righteous with God, never to ſpeak comfort more to my Soul, that have ſo lightly eſteemed his Promiſe, and ſweet word of comfort? Had it not been juſt with him now to ſit at the catch, and to take all this (as he well might) for an advantage againſt me? Was it not juſt that I, which lived in ſin, ſhould have periſhed in my ſins? and as juſt that I who have ſo much loved corruption, ſhould have reaped the bitter fruit of it, long ere this? But that the Lord ſhould find an enemy, and not ſlay him; nay, that he ſhould give his beloved *Son* out of his own boſome to ſave him; is a love not to be expreſſed. Oh the *height* of this mercy beyond all deſire or thought! Oh the *breadth* of this mercy, a breadth without any bounds! Oh the *length* of this mercy, a length beyond all times! Oh the *depth* of this mercy, a profundity beyond all expreſſion!

Labour here (therefore) to have acceſs

acceſs to the Promiſe, and to bring thy Soul unto it. Here, ſpeak a good word for it, and ſay; Stand off profits, and pleaſures, and preferments; room for the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Thus ſpeak, and ſet a peerleſs moſt excellent price upon the promiſe: and be ſure of this (for it is a ſure Rule) whatſoever the Soul doth account as beſt, that it will chuſe, and leave all others for it. Therefore if the Soul could once out-bid the world, and out-ſhoot the Devil in his own bow, and put by all thoſe things which the Devil caſts as rubs in its way of coming to the Promiſe; this labour would be a work of great gain, and uſher in the Promiſe it ſelf. For example as thus: when thou ſeeſt thy heart look after friends; let thoſe friends uſher the way to think on the infinite love and favour of God in Chriſt, that friend as he calls himſelf: and when thy heart would hunt after wealth, let this uſher a way to the Promiſe, and ſay, If the heart find ſuch content in riches, what ſhould it find in the riches of Gods

Gods grace in Christ! And thus preſent a greater good from the promiſe than any, from any thing elſe; and thou dealeſt ſafely and well for thy ſelf. This for the firſt Rule.

2. The ſecond Rule is; Labour to bring thy heart to this, That all the things in the world without the promiſe are nothing: and that if thou hadſt all that the earth can afford, and not it, thou haſt gotten but the wind, or that which will rather be a curſe unto thee than a bleſſing: For, *Faith is the ſubſtance of things hoped for.* It gives a kind of being and ſubſiſtence to all. So that there is no ſubſiſtence in honour or riches, if they ſubſiſt not by Faith; and without Faith they are cloggs and ſnares to us, no helpers; except Faith give them their denomination, and a bleſſing therewith, they are poor and empty things. Our prayers, if they want Faith in the promiſe, are prayers of no ſubſtance; words, and nothing elſe. On the other ſide, the moſt broken and chattering prayers of a poor Soul, when

Heb. 11. 1.

a poor creature can ſcarce utter five words with any ſenſe; yet theſe (how weak ſoever) mingled with Faith, are a very powerful prayer. So all your hearing, and my preaching hangs upon Faith; otherwiſe they are but loſt labour, wanting that that gives a kind of being to whatſoever I ſpeak, or you hear. This for the ſecond Rule.

The third Rule in this ſecond of the means, is this: Labour to acquaint thy heart with that good, which the promiſe promiſeth: and this, before carnal reaſon comes and poſſeſſes thy heart. Remember here that the promiſe is moſt ſure, and will come when it ſhall be moſt ſeaſonable, and beſt for thee, and when God ſees it moſt fit; for then, we ſhall moſt certainly have it. *Let us therefore come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that we may receive comfort and mercy in time of need.* Not when we ſee it fit, but when God ſees it fit and profitable. But this it is wch carries away many. Sometimes they are a little affected with the excellency of the riches of Gods

3.

Heb-4.16.

Gods grace in Chriſt, and ſeeing what great things the Lord hath done for their Soul, they ſay; Oh that I were ſuch a one; and oh that I might die the death of the righteous! But when it comes ſo to paſs that they have not what preſently they expect, then they caſt away their hope; and then the good Promiſe of GOD being out of requeſt, the Devil preſently ſteps in and wonderfully prevails with them; They ſay with the Prophet, Hab. 3. 17. *When the figtree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall the fruit be on the Vines, when the labour of the Olive ſhall fail and yield no fruit, then will I rejoyce in the Lord, and joy in the God of my Salvation.* But where no bloſſoms are, nor fruits appear, there all joy goes to ground. We do not conſider that comfort from the Promiſe, and from the Lord Jeſus, is then moſt ſeaſonable, when we have moſt need, and (conſequently) may receive moſt good by it: for then may we be ſure to have the Promiſe ſo to ſurpriſe our heart, that it ſhall be poſſeſſed and

and made happy with the All-sufficiency of God. But we go not so far. This for the second Rule.

In the third place, look for all the good which thou needest and canst desire from that sufficiency which is in the Promise; and do not think of thy self to add any good unto it, but go to it for all thy good: For, *there* are all the cords of mercy that must draw thee; and *there* is that All-sufficiency that can supply thee, and therefore look for all from thence, but think to bring nothing thither; nothing (I say) that can be of power to enable thee to a power of believing. 3. *Means.*

And here, it is a weak Plea for a man to say, I dare not look to the Promise, I cannot believe it; for if I could (and oh that I could) then I might expect some good fruit from it. *Object.*

To answer this, Thou shalt never believe upon these terms; for, thou must not first have Faith, and then go to the Promise, but must first go to the Promise for the power *Answ.*

of that Faith; from it thou muſt receive power to believe. And there-
Pſal. 119. 49. fore ſay with the Prophet. *O Lord remember thy word to thy ſervant, wherein thou haſt cauſed me to truſt.* When men are enlarged in love to a man, and make fair weather of promiſes unto him; this perſwades him to truſt unto them, and to relye upon them for good to come, therefore he ſaith, I durſt never ſo much as have thought of it, much leſs expected it, if you had not promiſed ſo much.

And even ſo here, the Promiſe of God (made to the Soul) makes the Soul to reſt upon what is promiſed.

To expect Faith without a promiſe, is as if a man ſhould expect a crop of Corn without ſeed; for the Promiſe is the immortal ſeed of God's Word, whereby the Spirit breeds this Faith in the hearts of all that are his. So Chriſt, *The hour*
Joh. 5. 25. *is coming, and now is, when the dead ſhall hear the voyce of the Son of God, and they that hear it, ſhall live:* It is ſpoken of raiſing of a dead man from

from the grave of sin. First, There is the voice of Christ to the soul, before there can be an Eccho again of that Soul to Christ; and so the power of the Promise must first come to the Soul, and we must first hear the voice of God in the Promise, before we can return an Eccho back again to the Lord: The Lord must say, *Come to me*, before the Soul can say, *I come Lord.* Therefore when thou seest much deadness, and dead unfitness of heart in thee to the Promise, do not thou then leave, and give off, and say, Thus I am, and so it is with me, and so an end; but go to the Promise and say, Whatsoever frailties I find in my self, yet I will look to the Lord, and to his Promise; for if I want Faith, the Promise must settle me, and I must not bring Faith to the Promise, but receive Faith from it to believe; and therefore I will wait upon God till he please to work it. Thus for the third Rule.

4. *Means.*

And now in the last place, and lastly, labour to submit to the most equal condition of the Promise, not

making more conditions there than God hath made. Now the Promise requires no more of a man, but that he come and lay hold on mercy; therefore do thou require no more. There is enough in the Promise to do thee good; therefore do thou expect all good from it, and be content there to take of God whatsoever he hath therein offered
Isa.55.12. to thy Faith. *Buy without money*, saith the Prophet: This is the condition that God offers mercy upon; buy Wine and Milk, that is, Grace and Salvation without Money, that is, without any sufficiency of your own. If a man should go running up and down to borrow money before he comes to buy, he may famish before he can come: So the Lord offering Christs mercy and Salvation without our cost, and saying, Come take it without money; and yet we will run up and down to borrow money of our *prayers* and other *duties* also, and from our *prayer against corruption*, we may be starved Spiritually before we can buy at that hand. If we

go

go this way to work, we may quickly loſe our labour, and our ſelves. And therefore make Gods commodities no dearer than God himſelf makes them. Many a poor Soul not remembring this, is kept from coming to the Promiſe: For, Oh, ſaith one; if I were able to maſter my ſins and diſtempers as ſuch a one can do, then I might with boldneſs believe. But this is to bring money: but art thou not content to have Chriſt of free coſt, ſo as he may have thee, and rule in thee, and ſupply what is wanting to thee, and open thy ſores, and heal thy corruptions? Then why goeſt thou not to the Promiſe with an empty heart, that the Lord may ſupply thee, and maſter all thy riſings, and make thee a clean heart? But that muſt come afterwards, as the Lord ſaith, *When I paſſed by thee, and ſaw thee in thy blood, and behold the time was as the time of love, and I ſpread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedneſs; yea I entred into a Covenant with thee, and thou becameſt mine* (that is, thou waſt con-

Ezek. 16. 8, 9.

content that God ſhould marry thee in all thy raggs) *then I waſhed thee with water, yea, I throughly waſhed away thy blood from thee, and anointed thee with oyl, I cloathed thee alſo with broidered work.* Here we ſee, that Chriſt firſt marrieth the Church to himſelf, and then gives grace, and paſſeth over his eſtate to his Spouſe. And now, were it not a wonderful great folly, if ſome great King ſhould make love to a poor Milk-maid, and ſhe ſhould put it off, and refuſe the match till ſhe were a QUEEN; where if ſhe will match with the King, ſhe may be ſure to be made a Queen preſently. But this comes after, and not before the marriage. So we muſt not look for Sanctification the firſt day, nor till we come to the Lord in our Chriſtian Vocation: For this is all the Lord requires of us, namely, to ſee our ſins, to be weary of them, to be content that the Lord Jeſus ſhall reveal unto us what is amiſs, and ſeal a pardon for it, and take it away; and (further) give us his grace to take down the

old

old building, and to ſet up a new one in us after his image; For then the Lord will bring us to himſelf; and into the wedding chamber; and then through his great mercy, all our corruption ſhall fall to the ground. And when the Lord hath brought thy unfaithful heart to believe; then labour to husband this grace well, and to improve it for thy beſt good, and live by it; It is a marvellous great ſhame to ſee thoſe that are born to fair means, I mean the poor Saints of God that have a right and title to grace and Chriſt, yet live at ſuch an under rate: I would have thee live above the world, though thou haſt not a coat to cover thee, nor a houſe to put thy head in; yet if thou haſt Faith, thou art a rich man; therefore husband thy eſtate well. It's a ſhame to ſee ſome live, and husband not that eſtate they have; they live as if they had it not, ſo full of want, ſo full of care, ſo full of pride, ſo weak, and unable to maſter their ſins, whereas the fault is not in the power of Faith, nor the Promiſe, nor in

the Lord; for God doth not grudge his people of comfort, but would have his people live chearfully and have ſtrong conſultations and mighty aſſurances of his love; and therefore the Text ſaith, *Rejoyce in the Lord always, and again, I ſay, rejoyce.* And ſo, *Heb.* 6.18. *God hath ſworn, that by two immutable things, wherein it's impoſſible for God to lie, we might have ſtrong conſolations:* Nay, the Lord rejoyceth in the Proſperity of his ſervants, and therefore hath richly provided for you, that you may rejoyce; and in not ſo doing, we offer a great deal of wrong to the Lord and his Promiſes, and bring an ill report upon that grace and mercy of his: And we hereby alſo open the mouths of the wicked, and make them ſay, Oh, theſe preciſe people talk of quiet and contentment, and joy in the holy Ghoſt! There is great talking of theſe things, but we could never ſee it yet. O brethren, it's a great ſhame; are the riches and revenues of Faith ſo great, that a Chriſtian may live like a man all his days?

Let

Let all the Drunkards and malicious wretches againſt God, laugh and be merry; yet they cannot ſee one of thoſe days that a poor Saint can; yea though he lay in priſon all his life long, *Mat.* 17. 20. *If a man had but Faith as a grain of Muſtard-ſeed, and ſhall ſay to this Mountain, Go hence, it ſhall be done.* Whether this be ſpoken of juſtifying Faith, or no, I will not now diſpute; but this I am ſure of, *Reſiſt the Devil, and he will flie from you*; and you may trample under all your luſts and corruptions: This is the life of Faith, and this life we may live, this life we ought to live. If a Tradeſman have a fair ſtock and quick returns, if he goes down the wind, and begin to decline and decay; every man will ſay, He was left marvellous well, but either he knew not how to uſe it, wanting skill, or elſe attended not on it, wanting care: Another man would have lived bravely upon half of that means which he had: So there is never a poor Chriſtian, which trades in a Chriſtian courſe, but he

hath a fair eſtate, and may live like a man. One promiſe is enough to make a man live comfortably all his days, though he were in never ſo much want: But if he be caſt behind hand, and goes down the wind with comfort and joy; and ſinks becauſe of his pride, and diſtempers, and vexation: the fault is not in the eſtate, for the Lord left him very well; he had a childs portion, had he had an heart to fear God and love him; as *David* ſaith, *Oh be merciful unto me, as thou uſeſt to do, unto thoſe that love and fear thy Name.* The fault was not in the Promiſe, that they could not, nor in his Faith that it would not help him: but he let the Promiſes lie by; they came into the table, but he never caſt them up, nor husbanded them aright: He had a world of conſolations, that would have given a man liberty in priſon, honour in ſhame and diſgrace, and comfort in time of diſtreſs; but he did not husband them: and therefore he adviſed to do as the Tradeſman doth; he will not ſpend

of

of his ſtock, but live of his trading; O I would have every Chriſtian live of his Faith. Whatever ſtrength thou needeſt, fetch it from grace in Chriſt; and whatever comfort thou wanteſt, fetch it from Chriſt; but live by faith. and make a good living of it too; and then thou haſt improved the promiſe aright: bring but an empty believing heart with thee, and the oyl will never fail, and the meal in the Barrel will never decay, but continually ſupply thee as it did that poor widow.

Object. But how ſhall a man be trained, that he get this skill of living by Faith? Every man hath his ſhifts and tricks, and lives by his own devices; and the Devil hath enough of them in the world that live this life, but the beſt life of all is little look'd after?

Now for an anſwer, know thus much, That there are three particulars for the training up the heart to learn this skill of living by Faith.

1. Firſt, We muſt labour to get matter for our Faith to work upon.

2. We

2. We muſt labour to fit Faith for the work.

3. We muſt labour to order our Faith aright in the work.

Firſt, We muſt provide matter for our Faith to work upon: For this we ſee ordinarily, if a workman want matter to work upon, either a Carpenter or the like, he muſt needs ceaſe his work, and he can go no further. And if a mans work fails, how can he provide for his family? This is the complaint of poor people now adays, that they have no work; ſo it is in a Chriſtians courſe; many poor Chriſtians that are newly ſet up, and are not aforehand in the World, they want even matter for their Faith, I mean, ſome are ignorant and cannot read, and ſome have not means of a preaching Miniſtry, others have but ſmall parts and cannot hear, and little do they retain of what they do hear. The Promiſes of God not underſtood, nor remembred, nor rightly applied, they live marvellouſly poor, when they live very comfortably in the

Now

Now the matter of our Faith, is the whole Word of God: as it is with the Bee in gathering honey: as the Spider gathers poiſon out of every flower; ſo the Bee gathers honey out of the ſame flower, and out of the ſweeteſt flower ſhe ſucks the moſt honey. Oh the Word of God, how full of ſweet flowers is it! There is the ſharpeſt terrors, and the fearfulleſt plagues too: A gracious heart will gather ſweetneſs out of both theſe. But above all, the ſweet of the Promiſes of the Goſpel, the ſap and ſweet therein, and the Blood of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt that is communicated thereby. Oh the faithful Soul ſucks moſt there. Now that we may provide matter for our Faith, obſerve theſe rules, which are commonly obſerved in all proviſions.

Firſt, They provide and lay in, in ſeaſon, timely, as ſoon as they can: this is the practice of him that would husband his eſtate wiſely; his care is to buy at the beſt hand: So I would have a good Chriſtian to ſtore

ſtore up all the Promiſes of God, in all the good Word of God ſeaſonably; I mean when all thy parts and abilities are ſtrong, and nature is able to fight it out; and while the fair day of Gods favour laſteth, and while the Word and Sacraments are diſpenſed, this is the beſt time to lay in Spiritual proviſions, that we may not want them, when we have uſe of them. It is a marvellous ſtrange and prepoſterous courſe, when a man is weak, his eyes dim, and his heart and ſtrength faileth, and even ready to give up the Ghoſt, then to lay in grace and proviſion of mercy: and then for him who hath hated the Miniſters, and loathed the means of grace, and abuſed the patience and long ſuffering of God: Oh then to have a Miniſter come to him, and have a Promiſe in the day of perſecution; then for a man to bethink himſelf of the promiſe and comforts of the Goſpel; when a man ſhould ſpend on the Promiſes, then to be getting of them, this is ill husbandry: The better way is this, to be buying and

getting

getting in at every turn: and this is the reaſon why our Saviour ſaith, *Oh if thou hadſt known, in this thy day the things that belong unto thy peace!* While the Word, and thy Life, and the Sabbaths, and the Ordinances laſt; this is thy day, we know not how ſoon the Lord may take all from us. Oh the eſtate of the poor *Palatinates*, if it be true we hear of them, they have loſt all the means of Grace, and they have Idolatry now amongſt them, and their enemies force them to go to Maſs againſt their Conſciences; and they cannot ſee a good Miniſter, nor a good Chriſtian, but they weep to conſider the times they once had: Therefore let's labour to be wiſe in the Lord, now while the fair is; and conſider how God deals with his Children: *Pſalm* 48. 9. *We have thought of thy Name, O Lord in the midſt of the Temple.* It is ſpoken there of the goodneſs of God towards *Sion*: A cup of poyſon, and a ſtone of ſtumbling: when he had ſpoken of all the Bulwarks that God had

had made, and all the goodneſs and mercy he had ſhewed to his people, and the malice and wrath of his enemies: he ſaith, This God is our God, even for ever: as if he had ſaid, The Lord did provide for his people in *Egypt*, and overthrow proud *Pharaoh* that ſet himſelf againſt God; and this is our God. When thou art in the Wilderneſs, this God is thy God; when thou art in perſecution, this God is thy God, and the God of all: thus he ſtores up while the ſeaſon laſts.

2. Note this, as thou muſt obſerve what God doth to others, ſo labour to treaſure up thy own experiences, 1 *Tim.* 4. 18. He hath delivered us, and he doth and will deliver us, ſaith the Apoſtle: and the Prophet *David* ſaith, *I remember thy judgment of old.* Oh well fare a good old ſtore: I remember, ſaith he, how thou didſt rebuke *Amalek*, and overthrow *Nimrod*, and *Nebuchadnezzar*, and *Ahitophel*. Oh it's admirable to conſider theſe things: I received comfort, ſaith he; God will over-

throw

throw every enemy, and this is ſtore for thy Faith to work upon, *Pſal.* 89. 49. *Where are thy former mercies?* *David* is afore-hand with God now; he is not come to buy food juſt at the time of famine, but it's laid up before-hand; lay in abundantly of all the Promiſes of all kinds, you had better leave than lack; and it's the wiſdom of a man to have ſomewhat to ſpare, and to have an over-plus afore-hand, that a man may not live feebly, and poorly, and be at his wits end every turn, and knows not which way to ſhift for himſelf, and have no bread in his houſe; I mean, no proviſion of Promiſes by him: *Iſaiah* 42. 23. *Who is wiſe, let him hear for after times*; As if he had ſaid, You muſt not only lay in Promiſes for the preſent, but ſtore them for afterwards; as the Chapman ſaith, I ſhall want this at ſuch a time; and ſo the husbandman ſaith, I ſhall have occaſion for this or that at ſuch a time, and ſo get it afore-hand. Oh that God would give us theſe hearts! It is good, as we may ſo ſay, to keep pro-

promiſes in pickle, that we may ſpend them at leaſure. *In the days of famine*, ſaith the Prophet, *thou ſhalt have enough.* Theſe precious promiſes will be good meat in Lent, when haply thou ſhalt ſit under a hollow tree, and creep among the Buſhes, then three or four of theſe Promiſes will give a man a good meal of comfort; therefore ſtore them up, they will do you no harm: and when you are driven from houſe, and home, and friends, and all, theſe will exceedingly refreſh. Oh how ſweetly are they ſcattered up and down in the Word, according to the Saints ſeveral neceſſities and occaſions. Bring this precious proviſion home, leave it not in the Market; it's a folly to ſay, I have good proviſion, but it is not here. *Let the Word of God dwell plenteouſly in you, and richly in all wiſdom.* Obſerve, It muſt be plenty, not ſcant; it muſt dwell in you, that you may but ſtep aſide and have it; there is the matter for your faith to work on. So alſo in the next place, we are to fit Faith for

for the ſervice, that it may ſucceed with more comfort and better ſpeed. Though a man be a Believer, yet there is a great deal of dulneſs and bluntneſs comes upon this grace, though he have it: *Luke* 24. 25. See how our Saviour chides his Diſciples, *Oh fools, ſlow and dull of heart to believe, &c.* So we ought to whet our Faith, that it may line and ſquare the Promiſes (as it is in the Hebrew) that it may pierce through the veil of all the riches of the freeneſs of Gods grace, and ſo bring comfort to us: It's with the hand of Faith, as it is with the hand of the body, if it be nummed, ſtiff, or frozen, a man muſt rub it or warm it before he can hold any thing; ſo it is with the hand of Faith, for Faith is the hand of the Soul, it takes hold of that mercy which God hath provided for us in Chriſt Jeſus. Now Faith is ſometime nummed and ſtiffe through careleſneſs and looſeneſs; therefore it's not enough for a man to have Faith, but he muſt ſupple and oyl the ſinews of Faith, that he may more freely

freely take hold of the Promiſes of life, and receive comfort from thence; and that this may be done we muſt, firſt maintain the evidence of Faith once gotten; with queſtion undeniable, this grace of Faith once gotten, is to be maintained: Mark it, I ſpeak not of thoſe that have not Faith; it is in vain to bid a man live by Faith who hath none: but it's for thoſe in whoſe hearts God hath been pleaſed to work this bleſſed grace: This muſt be the care of thoſe that have gotten Faith: he muſt know the nature of Faith in general, and of his Faith in particular, whether it be of that Faith which *Peter* ſpeaks of; for there is a great deal of Copper-faith in the World: As, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners, and the like: Now when thou haſt gained evidence that thou haſt Faith, then fill it up, and keep it by thee, and labour to make the demonſtration of it ſo plain to thy ſoul, that it may be undeniable. What a great folly is it for a man to queſtion, when he ſhould

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uſe it? The work muſt needs be much hindred, though he have never ſo much Faith, when he begins to cavil with it, and to queſtion whether it be good or no: It's a proverbial ſpeech, He that doubts of his way, miſſeth his way; for while he is doubting, he goes no way in concluſion.: ſo he that queſtions whether he hath Faith or no, gets little good at preſent by it; tell a poor ſinner of living by Faith, and he ſays, it's good news if he had it. 'Tis poor comfort to bid a man go warm him when he hath no fire; ſo it's poor comfort to bid a man live by that which he never had; quarrelling and doubting when a man hath it, hinders the uſe and benefit of Faith: Here is a man that is quarrelling about it, when he ſhould live on it: when the Diſciples ſaw Jeſus walking on the Sea, they thought it was a Spirit, but Jeſus ſaid unto them, *Be of good comfort, it is I:* Now when *Peter* knew it was Chriſt, being ſomewhat too venturous, he ſaid, *If it be thou Lord, bid me come unto thee*

thee on the water; and Chriſt ſaid *Come*, and *Peter* going, the water began to be boiſtrous, his heart began to ſink, &c. and Chriſt ſaid unto him, *Oh thou of little Faith, why doeſt thou doubt?* as if he had ſaid, it's now no time of doubting, but a time of believing: The Lord bid him come, and he had ground enough to come, and ſtrength of Faith to come; but when he ſaw the Waves great and troublesom, inſtead of believing, he fell a queſtioning and quarrelling with the Promiſe: As it is with a foul ruſty musket, ſhoot ſuch a one off, and it will recoil. When Faith grows ruſty with doubting, we ſit down diſmay'd and unſetled; the very queſtioning and quarrelling againſt the work of Faith, many times doth as much diſ-able a man to put forth the power of Faith, as if he had no Faith at all.

Secondly, When thou haſt maintained the clearneſs of the work of grace before gained, then labour to bring thy heart to marvellous ſtilneſs and calmneſs from time to time.

Stayedneſs

Stayedneſs and ſtilneſs of the Soul, frames the heart to hold the ſhield ſteadily, and bear off the blow comfortably when it comes; thoſe boiſtrous affections, thoſe crowds and troops of troubleſom imaginations, as fear and jealouſie; theſe unrank the frame of the Soul, that it is not at the command of Faith; as it is in an Army, when ranks and files are broken, they are at a rout, be the Commander never ſo skilful, he cannot in that condition march on: So though we had never ſo victorious a Faith, yet if the Soul were hurled up and down with thoſe boiſtrous diſtempers, the Soul could not command Faith. When it was told the Diſciples, *Luke* 24. 41. that Chriſt was riſen from the dead, and had manifeſted himſelf to them; the Text ſaith, *They believed not, and wondered*: they would not believe for a while, and it was through the violence of their joy; which made them they had no leiſure to believe. As it's true of moderate affection, ſo it's true of ſtrong fear, and care and diſtempers,

ſtempers becauſe theſe hurry the Soul violently, and tranſport it ſo, that he cannot believe: as it is in a road, the Traveller is fitted to go his journey, but he is hindred becauſe the crowd is ſo great and ſtrong, that they croſs him, and oppoſe him, and are ready to carry him another way againſt his will; juſt ſo it is with a ſoul thus troubled with tumultuous thoughts, eſpecially melancholy, and thoſe other enemies of the ſoul, as vain imaginations, ſinful fears, ſinful ſorrow, diſtempered thoughts and cares; that though the heart is willing and able to believe, yet thoſe ſtirrings of boiſtrous affections, they croſs Faith in the way, and bear it down: there *David* chides his heart in *Pſalm* 43. 5. even rocks it aſleep, and would bring it quiet, ſaying, *Why art thou ſo diſquieted, Oh my Soul, why art thou diſquieted within me?* There are things fit our purpoſe in this Text.

1. That a tumultuous diſtemper of heart makes a man lie flat upon his back, and ſink into a ſwound.

2. It

2. It hinders the work of Faith, mark what follows: *Still truſt in God:* As if he had ſaid, Leave thoſe diſtempers of heart, and reſt upon the freeneſs of God's grace.

3. *David* yet looks up to God for mercy: *For he is yet my God.* The vertue of this Rule we find by experience, eſpecially in melancholly perſons, when they have ſwarms of thoughts buzzing in their minds; ſometimes reſtleſs fears, that do chaſe their hearts, as the hound does the Deer in the Foreſt; and after this comes another affection, and after that another; and ſo at laſt they come all together: Sometimes the horrour of a mans conſcience makes hue and cry after him, and makes him ſay, Oh how my heart ſmites me! methought I ſaw Hell gaping for me, and the Devil even ſtanding at my Elbow, ready to carry me down to everlaſting deſtruction: this makes his ſoul to have ſuch an amazement and gaſtlineſs of ſpirit, that he cannot reach the Promiſe of God. Well, take the Lords advice

by the Prophet: *Fear not*, but *ſtand ſtill, and ſee the ſalvation of the Lord:* that is, lay aſide thoſe reſtleſs imaginations, and thoſe crowds of fooliſh conceits; ſtand ſtill, and be quiet, and with the eye of Faith behold the ſalvation of God.

A third Rule how Faith may be fitted for the work: take notice of this. In the want of any means, do not *firſt* ſeek for them; and in the preſence of any means God affords, look not *firſt* to them for ſuccour and ſupply, but *firſt* go to the Promiſe, that it may ſupply what you need, and that the Promiſe may bleſs what means you have. It is an uncomfortable and diſorderly courſe, for a man barely and firſtly to look at thoſe things which are within the compaſs of Senſe, and ſo range up and down in the uſe of the means, when the Promiſe and Chriſt are the laſt thought of in our hearts. As for inſtance: In a time of poverty, how doth the Soul unfit it ſelf for the Promiſe? When a man ſees his eſtate low, and he is like to come to miſery,

ſery, he ſaith, I have ſome good friends that will not ſee me want, I have ſo much means left yet, and I have my health and ſtrength, and I hope to get a poor living. Not one word all this while of a Promiſe: But what ſay you to this? If death take away all thy friends, ſickneſs take away thy health and ſtrength, fire or thieves take away all thy goods, whither wilt thou now go? When then at a dead lift as we commonly ſay, he is fain to go to that mercy which *endureth for ever.* Oh friend, are you there: now? Why came you not thither at firſt? Well, ſince thou are come, reaſon thus: I am like to be poor, and my friends may dye, and thieves may rob me of all my goods, but the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever. So a Miniſter, that is faithful, deſires to preach fruitfully, and to the benefit of the Congregation; and then we catch at the helps that are near at hand, and we go to our Books and Studies, our wits and pains, and think theſe will do the deed. We do well

in all this; but the fault is in the order of doing them. Haply God knocks off man's wheels, and a man is not able to come to the bottom of the point; and if he be able to compaſs the truth in ſome meaſure, yet God blaſts all he doth, and there is no good comes to the Souls of his people; at laſt he is fain to go to the Promiſe; and then the poor Miniſter ſaith, Lord, thou haſt ſaid thou wilt be with thy faithful Miniſters *to the end of the world:* Little ſtrength there is in us; but be thou with us, Lord: now the work goes on again. The Tradeſman is honeſt and painful, and he hopes to compaſs a good eſtate by his Calling, his ſtock is good and great, and his skill is ſufficient, and his penyworth ſhall be as reaſonable as any others, and his acquaintance are many: Then God blaſts all theſe, and then he comes to the Promiſe, as in *Pſalm* 1. 3. *Whatſoever the righteous doth it ſhall proſper.* Hold here now, and ſay, I expect all from the Promiſe, mercy and ſuccour from the Promiſe.

miſe. This was the courſe that *Jacob* took, *Gen.* 32. 9. firſt he wreſtled with God and overcame him; then he wreſtled with his brother *Eſau*, and ſaith, *O God of my Father* Abraham, *and God of my Father* Iſaac, which ſaidſt unto me, *Return into thine own Country, and I will do thee good; I am not worthy the leaſt of all thy mercies: Lord, deliver me from the hand of my brother* Eſau, *for I fear him.* Thus he wreſtled with the Lord by vertue of a promiſe, overcame him, and then overcame his brother *Eſau*, *Hebrews* the 13. 4, 5. *Marriage is honourable among all men, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.* But how will you have help againſt this covetouſneſs? A man would have ſaid thus: You have got a good portion, and but little charge, and many friends: but this courſe God takes: for he ſaith, *I will never leave thee nor forſake thee.* And thus when I have chaſed away Doubting, then Faith is ready, and the Shield is ſcoured.

Now for the ordering of Faith in the work, there are two things to be attended to.

1. How the Soul ſhould get to the Promiſes.

2. How the Soul ſhould take, receive and improve this ſufficiency and excellency that is in God.

1. How the Soul ſhould get to the Promiſe: You ſee all is ready, the way open, and Faith is fitted. There are three Rules to be obſerved, how the Soul may get to the Promiſe.

1. Throw off all power and ability in thy ſelf. *Nevertheleſs*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me*: It is not I that live by any power of my ſelf, but Chriſt liveth in me. It was Chriſt's quickning, reviving, and enabling, though he had Faith. *I know*, ſaith the Prophet, *Jer.* 10. 23. *that the way of man is not in himſelf, neither is it in man to direct his own ſteps.* So do thou ſay, if ever thou wouldſt have thy heart fitted to go to the Promiſe, Say, It is not here, Lord it is not in this vain mind, it is not in the pow-

er,

er of this dead heart, or any paſſage that ever I received, whereby I am able to believe in thee. I mean the principle of life is not here, the root of Faith is in the Promiſe, and from thence it comes into the Soul. As it is with a Mariner, when the Ship is upon the ground in the ebb and low water, he doth not expect to tug his Ship to the Shore by any power of himſelf: So, It is not in my wiſdom that can direct me, and it is not in my weapon that can defend; it is not this humility that can bring my ſoul down: It is not here, it is not I, Lord, that can reſt, or go to a Promiſe; even all our abilities are at a low ebb: All that we are, or can do, is to empty our ſelves and fit our ſelves, and get up the main maſt; that is, let the Soul be ready for a Promiſe, and by vertue of that be carried Heaven-ward, and Chriſt-ward. Take notice of this in your own Souls, that the heart would begin at home: If a temptation come, the heart of it ſelf would overcome it; and if a duty to be done, the heart

of it ſelf would perform it: and if oppoſition come, the heart of it ſelf would reſiſt it. O remember that a man offers an injury againſt Reaſon, Senſe, and Religion, and all. Now thy Faith begins to wreſtle with him and his dealing; and conſcience checks, and thou wilt tear thy own heart out of thy own boſom. Brethren, this will not do it: when a Ship of an hundred Tun is upon ground, the Marriners may pull and tug their hearts out, ere they make her go. Oh go then and ſay, It is not I that can be patient, and put up a wrong, be quiet, expect it not from hence. Let the heart lie ſtill, till the wind and tyde, and promiſe come, and that will carry thee.

The Second Rule, Bring the promiſe home to thy heart, that the promiſe may bring thy heart to it: and thus I would have you reaſon: The Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by the power of his Spirit, is in the promiſe undeniably, and undoubtedly, and unſpeakably accompanying in his manner, as he ſhall ſee fit. This I

ſay,

ſay, That the Almighty power of Chriſt doth really and continually accompany the promiſe for the good of his: Hence it is called, *The Spirit of promiſe*; for there is an Almighty creating work goes along with the Promiſe. And I reaſon thus: That Word that diſcerns the thoughts of the hearts of men, that Word muſt needs have the Almighty Work of God's Spirit accompanying of it: ſo far as God hath promiſed it, not when thou haply think'ſt it fit, but when God ſees it fit. He doth it as a voluntary workman, therefore thou conſidereſt that there is an Almighty power, and a fulneſs in the promiſe. Then lay that promiſe upon thy own heart, and conclude it, and look for vertue from thence, to draw thy ſoul to it again.

I have ſeveral paſſages to expreſs this more fully. *Jacob* would not believe that *Joſeph* was alive, or if he were alive, he had but little means, and was poor, *Gen.* 45. 26, 27, 28, 29. *But when he ſaw the chariots that* Joſeph *had ſent him, then he*

he believed and ſaid, I have enough; Joſeph *my Son liveth.* The Chariots ſent from *Joſeph* to *Jacob*, brought *Jacob* to *Joſeph.* So every believing ſoul is poor and feeble, and diſabled to go to God, and to believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt: therefore look thou unto the Chariots of *Iſrael* firſt, and that will convey thee to the Promiſe: As it is with the Miller, firſt he pares the Mill fitly, and orders all the occaſions thereof, and when the ſtones are fit, and laid to go, yet it will not, till the ſluce be pulled up, and the water run that drives the Mill: So the Soul is humbled, and lies level with the Lord and his Truth, and is content to yield to his conditions; but now the ſoul of it ſelf, in it ſelf, cannot go, it hath not the principle of going; but let down the ſluce of the promiſe, and let that come to thy heart, and it will bring thy ſoul home to the Lord; as *Luke* 19. 9. *This day Salvation is come to thy houſe*: Not to the walls of thy houſe, but to men that are in thy houſe. They did not come to ſalvation, but

ſalvation

ſalvation came to them. The Lord ſent ſalvation to ſalute the houſe of little *Zacheus*.

The third Rule. When the promiſe is thus come home to thee, and thou ſeeſt the ſufficiency and authority of it, then all thou haſt to do is this; In the ſtream of that promiſe, be carried home to the promiſe. The Prodigal, *Luke* 15. is ſaid to be like a *loſt ſheep*. (Mark this, for it concerns you, poor creatures.) The poor ſheep is wandering up and down, now in the mouth of the Lyon, and then in the briars, and ſometimes in the pit. The Text ſaith, *He leaveth ninety nine to ſeek that*; That is, in compariſon of what care he expreſſeth to the loſt sheep; he leaveth a man regenerate not careleſly, but he will not expreſs ſo great love as to a poor loſt man; And though thou canſt not find the way to Heaven, yet he will find it thee; lie thou upon the ſhoulders of Chriſt. When thou findeſt thy heart feeble and weak, and thy ſelf unable to believe, then the Lord Jeſus Chriſt brings the

Spirit

Spirit of grace, and that comes to ſeek, and Jeſus Chriſt lays that Soul of thine upon his ſhoulders, that is, upon the riches of the freeneſs of his grace: Therefore let thy heart be tranſported by the power of that grace, and by the vertue of that mercy that God hath made known to thee for thy everlaſting good. When the chariots are come, get up into them. The Lord Jeſus Chriſt is gone up to Heaven, and hath ſent theſe chariots for thee; therefore get thee up, and ſay, Lord, take me up with thee. When the Mariner hath Sea-room enough, he cares for no man, if he can but obſerve the channel; he looks not ſo much at his oar, or any thing, ſo that he can but obſerve the channel. This channel is the full tyde of promiſe; therefore lay thy ſelf upon the promiſe, and ſay, Lord, in the vertue of that grace, and in the power of that Spirit, carry me; and in the riches of that mercy of thine, Lord convey the heart of this poor ſinner, and make me happy with thy ſelf for ever.

Again,

Again, Never let a quick ſtock lie dead by you; it's monſtrous ill husbandry not to be trading with a quick ſtock. As it is in the world with temporals, even ſo it is in our ſpiritual eſtate. Though a man have little for the preſent, yet if he have ſome old reverſions to come, it will refreſh his heart, and bear him up in time of poverty and miſery; and he ſaith, If he can make but a ſcrambling ſhift for a while, for ſo long time, then he hopes to live as well as any man in the Country: So there is ſome of the Promiſes we have in poſſeſſion. Oh, but there is the reverſion of old promiſes, old rents. As old rents of Farms that were lett long ago, when the Leaſes come out, they are worth treble the rent they were lett for at the firſt: ſo there are old rents of comfort and mercy; as, *Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you.* Then no more tears, no more trouble, no more ſorrow, no more ſin. Oh get thoſe into your hands, and have them in uſe, and ſay, The day will come

when

when we ſhall have happineſs and joy beyond all that the tongue of man can expreſs, or the heart conceive. Though we are buffeted with many temptations, and wearied with a world of corruptions, yet we ſhall be ſaved, ſaith Faith: Thus a man may make a pretty good ſhift to live upon theſe terms, though we have nothing elſe to live upon in the world. Remember what I ſpeak now, and labour to faſten this truth upon thy heart, That there is not only preſent good in thy ſelf, but in another, and reſerved by another for thy comfort, and be thou content it ſhould be ſo; not only to look what thou haſt, but conſider that the greateſt part of thy glory, is in the glory of a Chriſt; and the greateſt part of thy wiſdom, is in the wiſdom of a Chriſt; and the greateſt part of thy liberty, in the liberty of a Chriſt; and thy riches, in the riches of a Chriſt. And know, whatever is in Chriſt thou haſt it all as thine, *John* 3. 12. *Behold what love the Father hath ſhewed to us, that we are*

now

now *the Sons of God*! I tell you, brethren, this is a marvellous priviledge, and if you had no more but this, you had a child's portion; but it appears not what we ſhall have, we have but a glimpſe now: what think you will the Harveſt be? Now we have but the ſips of it, what ſhall then the full cups be, when *we ſhall ſee Chriſt as he is*? Thus did *Moſes* improve his eſtate, *Heb.* 11. 26. He bore all afflictions comfortably; yea, *He eſteemed the rebukes of Chriſt as greater riches than the treaſures of Egypt*; Why, *becauſe he had an eye to the recompence of the reward.* We account not of a mans eſtate for what he hath in preſent poſſeſſion; but what is like to befal him, and what he is born unto. What *Moſes* did, do thou: Remember thou haſt a good ſtock upon the ground, which will pay all thy debt, and yet live like a man too. Though thou haſt many corruptions, many diſgraces caſt upon thee; though thou haſt little ſtrength, and art at great loſs in point of comfort; yet there is enough

enough in Heaven, enough in Chriſt, both of riches and comfort. Let thy ſoul then be careful to make all theſe preſent with thee for thine own good.

But ſome will ſay, How may a man expect that from the Promiſe, which God intends, and will undoubtedly beſtow?

For anſwer hereunto, I will ſhew what thou may'ſt expect, and what God will undoubtedly beſtow. If thou doſt believe, Heaven and Salvation are certainly thine, and perſeverance to the end, and that manner aud meaſure of aſſiſtance, that may make thee fit for perſeverance: Theſe three things grow here. But for temporal bleſſings which we deſire, and that meaſure of ſpiritual bleſſings which we muſt have; ſo much grace, and ſo much aſſiſtance, and ſo much abilities to do duties; God doth not engage himſelf to beſtow theſe. But that which God engageth himſelf to beſtow, both for temporal and ſpiritual bleſſings, it may be diſcovered in theſe three.

three particulars. So much grace and assurance of God's love, and so much comfort in grace as he sees fit for thee, after his own order, and in his own time. I will open them all, because many do here bungle wonderfully.

First, He will bestow them in his own order, not thy order. First, He will make thee fit, and make thee good, that thou may'st be able to digest them, and then he will bestow them on thee. Haply a poor man is driven to desperate hazard, and is brought miserably under, and therefore the heart cries earnestly for some more supply; and he calls, and God answers not; and he labours to look up to the Promise, where God saith *Nothing shall be wanting to his*, and yet it cometh not. I say, God will give these in his own order. First, God will make thee fit for this estate, and then give it. I never knew a good man desperately poor, but his heart was desperately proud; therefore the Lord will make him good, and make his proud heart yield, and then bestow

beſtow theſe things: Look for tha Fev
firſt; and then for the other. him

Again, Another Chriſtian labour and
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Gods love and cannot obtain it, and th
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ſes, and yet he cannot find it ſetled, n
Well, God will give thee comfort a
and conſolation, but in his own i
time. And know this, that commonly the Lord never debars the ſoul of comfort, but he ſees the heart is not fit for it. Thy heart would be proud and careleſs, and God would hear no more of thee, and thy ſail would overturn the boat; therefore when God hath abaſed thy heart, and made thee content to want what he ſhall deny, then he will give thee aſſurance, but it muſt be in his order. And this is the reaſon why the moſt ſmoak out their days in diſcontent; the reaſon is, There is a proud heart and a ſturdy diſpoſition of ſpirit that will not come unto Gods terms. As it is with a Phyſician; he will not give a Cordial to his Patient, when he will: for if he were in a burning

Fever,

Fever, it were the next way to ſend him going; but firſt he purges him, and makes him fit, and then gives him a Cordial: So it is in theſe things which thou craveſt, the Lord will give thee them, when thou ſhalt not ſurfeit of comfort, and aſſurance, and proſperity; and when thy heart is emptied and purged, and able to digeſt theſe things, then the Lord will give them.

Secondly, The Lord will give us temporal bleſſings, and that meaſure of ſpiritual, in his own due time; not when thou and I would, but when he ſees moſt fit; as *John* 2. 3, 4. The mother of Jeſus comes to our Saviour, and ſaith, *They have no wine.* She thought ſhe had Chriſt at command: but he anſwers her, *Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.* So it is with our Souls; we want comfort, and we want ſtrength againſt our corruptions, and aſſurance, and aſſiſtance: But what have I to do with that proud heart, ſays our Saviour? *my* time *is not yet come.* You would

have

have it now, as they ſaid, *Wilt thou now reſtore the Kingdom to* Iſrael: God will do in his own time, and we muſt wait his leaſure. This is one thing that doth neceſſarily accompany the Covenant of Grace, as I have ſhewed before. That the Lord ſhould diſpenſe of his Kingdom when he pleaſeth, and not when we will. When the Lord ſees theſe bleſſings of Spiritual mercies and Temporal favours are ripe, and moſt ſeaſonable to thy neceſſity; then thou ſhalt have them: but the time is in God's hand.

Thirdly, The Lord doth not promiſe in ſuch a manner and meaſure, and ſuch a peculiar thing, to give that temporal bleſſing, and that ſpiritual aſſiſtance we deſire; but the Lord will do that which he knows moſt fit: for ſo the Text ſays, *Feed me with food convenient for me.* There was Faith now; he wholly refers himſelf to God. When a man comes to the Taylor to have a garment made, he doth not cut out the Garment himſelf, but refers it to the judge-

ment

ment of the workman. So muſt we do, refer our ſelves to God, and know, God promiſeth nothing, but as he ſees it fit for thy good. It may be thou ſhalt not have this bleſſing, or that grace. As it is with a Potter, he is minded to make ſo many veſſels of honour: ſo if the Lord will make thee a veſſel of honour, go away contented; whether thou haſt ſo much proſperity, and ſo much good, or no, and ſo much grace, it skills not; it is enough that thou art elected to eternal happineſs.

Now you ſee how to manage and improve the Promiſe aright for your beſt advantage, and to expect that from the Promiſe which it will yield.

Again, Another particular in this third Rule of living by Faith, is this: How to take, and how to enjoy the ſap and ſweet of the promiſe, and to live by it. When the Huſbandman hath ſown his ground, and his fruit is ripe, and he hath reaped it, then he muſt gather in his corn that he may live upon it. So let us gather

gather in the Promiſes when we ſee and the beſt advantage; now let us take it; the gain, and live by it, and that comfortably too, in the proof of God's goodneſs therein. For this end, let me ſuggeſt theſe five Directions.

Firſt, Thou ſeeſt what God is in the Promiſe: and thou expecteſt no more than God is there. Then, eye that particular good in the Promiſe which thou ſtandeſt in need of; eye that good in Chriſt, and in the Promiſe, and then ſet Gods power and Faithfulneſs a work to bring that good, and his Wiſdom to continue it. As for inſtance: I am in perſecution, and either I would have deliverance and ſafety, that I might not be impriſoned, or elſe comfort and refreſhment, if the Lord carry me thither; and therefore I would ſee all this in the Promiſe, ſtill reſerving the conditions before mentioned. If thou art in priſon, eye liberty and preſervation in Chriſt, he that is the great Deliverer of his people, and carrieth his people in his own hands: And then ſet Gods power

and

and faithfulneſs a work, that can do it; and his wiſdom, that can continue it for thy good. That which thou ſeeſt and needeſt in the Promiſe, that the Power and Wiſdom of God may communicate to thy Soul. This is the meaning of that place, *Pſalm* 37. 5. *Commit thy ways unto the Lord, truſt in him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs.* Root thy ſelf, and lay all thy occaſions upon the Lord: Therefore the Apoſtle ſaith, 1 *Pet.* 5. 7. *Hurl your care upon the Lord, for he careth for you.* It is Gods proper office and work: he careth for thy Soul, therefore lay it all upon him, and put over all thy care into his hands, and ſet his power and faithfulneſs a work; only this is here a little to be ſcanned. I ſpeak not this, that we ſhould take no care at all, but I ſay, Hang all the weight and burden upon the Lord. The Brewer he tumbles the Barrel of Beer, and he rouls it, but it's the earth that bears it: So what ever trouble is in thine eye, or ear, or heart, roul it upon the Lord. That is thus: The weight

of

of a man lies eſpecially in three things, which a man muſt hurl off himſelf, and lay upon the Lord. Either a man ſhall not be able to know what he ſhall do, or what he is commanded: Or elſe, Secondly, He ſhall not be able to do what God commands, and he knows: Or elſe, Thirdly, He ſhall not find ſucceſs in what he doth. It is not a trouble to do what we can, or to employ ourſelves as we are able: but this is the trouble, when the heart ſaith, I know not what the mind of God is; or, I ſhall not do what I know; or, it will not ſucceed: or, No, it is not in my power. Now leave all theſe with God, and meddle not with them, but put them over to the Lord, and meddle with thine own duty, and with thine own work; and let God alone with his: and ſay thou unto the Lord, In truth, Lord, it is not in my power, it is not in my parts or work, either to compaſs that wiſdom, that is able to direct my ſelf, or to have any power to do all that is commanded, much leſs

leſs to give good ſucceſs. Lord, I will not meddle with that, but leave it to thy Majeſty: if thou in thy power canſt not, nor in thy faithfulneſs and goodneſs careſt not for thy poor helpleſs creature, then I am content: and if thou wilt not be faithful, then I am content to be miſerable.

And ſo alſo thou mayeſt ſuppoſe a man that hath promiſed to undertake ſome buſineſs for a friend, and in the end it proves ſomewhat troubleſom, and therefore he wiſhes his friend to take it again into his own hands; for it is very troubleſom: But a man will leave it to him, and ſay, He hath engaged himſelf to do it, and he will not look after it; I will not meddle with it any more. So what end it is that is in God's Royal Prerogative, leave it with God, and do not meddle with it, Let God now look to it; leave it to his faithfulneſs and power to accompliſh it: ſo did *Abraham*, Rom. 14. 18, 19, 20. *Abraham above hope believed under hope, that he ſhould be the Father of*

many Nations. *Sarah*'s womb was barren, and his body dead, and yet he muſt have a Son: And therefore he ſet God's power a work, and faith, v. 21. Lord, this body is dead, and *Sarah* is barren: there is no help here: but thou art able, and thou haſt engaged thy ſelf to do it. You ſee he ſets God's power to work, and puts over all the right and burthen of the care upon the Lord. And therefore ſays *Mordecai*, *Eſther* 4. 14. If *thou hold thy peace at this time, comfort and deliverance ſhall come from ſome other place.* He was reſolved that God had deliverance from his Church, and would not deny his Truth. *Salvation will come*, ſaith the Text. He knows not the place or the means: but he knows *Salvation will come.* So ſet thou God's power and faithfulneſs to work, and not thy own care: Commit it to the Lord, and hurl thy care upon him, ſo far as concerns the burthen of it. This is the firſt Direction.

Secondly, By Faith go to the Promiſe again for help and power to wait

wait on God in that way, and to look towards God in the uſe of thoſe means that he hath appointed for the attaining of that good which his power will work for thee: God will certainly work it: And ſo thou muſt meet God in the courſe of his providence, in the improvement of the means he hath appointed for thy good. Obſerve thou this providence, and do thou what God requires: for otherwiſe we live not by Faith, but tempt God, and throw away the Promiſe and all, and deprive our ſelves of that good which God would beſtow; we not walking in that way which he hath appointed. *Luke* 24. 49. when our Saviour was to go to Heaven, he ſaid, *Behold I ſend the promiſe of my Father amongſt you: but tarry you in the City of* Jeruſalem, *until you be indued with power from above.* Chriſt would indue them with the Spirit; but they muſt tarry at *Jeruſalem*, and wait for it. So I ſay, Would'ſt thou have grace and the Spirit from above, and the wealth of the world? then walk

in that way God hath appointed: ſtay at *Jeruſalem*, and be in the way, and meet God in his providence, and then thou ſhalt receive from his power and faithfulneſs what thou needeſt. Thou wouldſt have God bleſs thee in thine eſtate, and yet thou wouldſt be idle and careleſs: but this will not do the deed: God would give thee a bleſſing, but thou art not there to take it. This is the excellency of the Promiſes of God; as they require conditions before they beſtow mercies; ſo they make us able to be partakers of the conditions, and give the conditions: As for Example, *Ezek.* 36. the Lord in the former part of the Chapter promiſeth to give them many things; but how? It muſt be by Prayer, and humbling themſelves before him: he will give thee a Family-bleſſing, by Prayer in it; and a Bleſſing in private, by Prayer in private; and ſtrength againſt ſin, and power againſt corruption: But I will be ſought unto for all theſe, ſaith the Lord: and the Text ſaith, *Bleſſed is*

the

the man that walketh in his integrity, and his children after him. Therefore walk thou in the integrity of thine heart; that's the condition of a Chriſtian in general; or as a husband, or as a wife, or as a ſervant, in the particular. This the Promiſe requires. But mark this now: The ſame promiſe that requireth the conditions, will help us to perform the conditions: and the ſame Lord that ſaith, *I will be intreated and ſought to for all theſe*; the ſame Lord ſaith, *Pſal.* 10. 17. *He prepareth their hearts to pray.* Go thou therefore to God to help thee to pray, that he may beſtow his bleſſing upon thee, which he hath promiſed, *Ezek.* 26.27. He will firſt give them *a new heart*, then *teach them to walk in his ways.* So if thou wilt walk in his ways, thou ſhalt have his bleſſings; therefore go thou by the power of Faith to the Promiſes of God for ſtrength and grace, and in that thou muſt uſe the means appointed, and then expect a bleſſing from it in the courſe of his providence. Now is God's power and

faithfulneſs ſet a work.

The third Direction. We muſt ſet it down, and conclude it, that God will do it; ſo ſhall we receive in the ways of his providence whatſoever he hath promiſed to give. That is the work of Faith, and that is to draw ſap and vertue from the Promiſe, *John* 3. 33. There by ſealing is meant ſealing to the Promiſe. This is the nature of ſealing; when a man hath drawn the Articles of agreement, and when they have ſealed, the whole matter is done. So Faith muſt make the Promiſe authentical, and put a ſeal to it that it is true, and ſaith, It is done in Heaven, and I am fully reſolved, and ſetledly perſwaded thereof, that I ſhall have whatever I have believed, and thou haſt promiſed, and I have uſed means in the ways of thy providence. Famous is that of *Abraham*, *Gen.* 22. 5. The Lord had bidden him ſacrifice his Son, and yet had ſaid before he ſhould live: and therefore when he came to the place, he ſaid to his ſervants, *Abide you here with the*

Aſſes;

Asses; for I and the Child will go yonder and sacrifice, and return again to you. He thought to Sacrifice him, and yet by Faith be believed that he should bring *Isaac* again. So I would have a poor Saint of God believe and conclude. When thou findest thy comforts like *Isaac*'s, in the ashes, and thy estate helpless and hopeless, yet even then set God's power a work, and wait upon him in the use of the means that he hath appointed, and there conclude it, and bring patience, power, and deliverance, and so in every kind, according to all thy necessities. Yet remember this, Expect no more from the Promise, than God will give in the Promise: but say, My sins shall be mastered one day, and these temptations shall one day be overthrown, that have so long annoyed the soul of thy servant: I have begg'd succour against these corruptions within, and these temptations without, and yet it is not; but I know it's done in Heaven; it wants nothing but the taking out; thou wilt bestow upon

thy ſervant what thou ſeeſt fit, 1 *Sam.* 1. 18. *Hannah* wept ſore, and prayed to the Lord, and went away, and was no more ſorrowful: and ſhe ſaid, Lord, I believe that I ſhall either have a child, or that which is as good, or better: now the buſineſs was done. But imagine the Lord delays, and does not ſuddenly accompliſh what he intends, and thou haſt uſed means to receive; he gives not, grants not, nor ſends not ſuccour according to thy deſire, and the tenure of the Covenant, as thou conceiveſt.

Then in the fourth place, Faith is to take up its ſtand, and ſtay till it come: as thou reſolveſt ſo it will be: ſtay till it be, and ſtay it out. Here is much work to do. We prevent God's kindneſs, when we go away before he be willing to beſtow a kindneſs on us. But Faith will not do ſo: he that believes, does not make haſt: he makes haſt to obey, but he ſtays, and reſolves that it will be. *The viſion is for an appointed time*, therefore wait for it. Thou

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are pestered with thy sins, and hast laboured by Faith to subdue them: and thy estate is low, and thou hast laboured by Faith for deliverance: and yet it comes not: therefore stay till God sees fit, and it will come, *Psalm* 123. 2. *As the eyes of a servant look to the hands of his master; and the eyes of a maiden to her mistress: so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until he have mercy upon us.* It is not, Till I will, or till I see fit, or according to my mind: but until the Lord have mercy. We suddenly slide away from the Covenant which the Lord makes with us: because we have it not when we will, therefore we go away, 1 *Sam.* 13. 13. When *Samuel* tarried long, and the people began to murmur, *Saul* went and offered a burnt-offering to the Lord: and therefore *Samuel* said unto him, *Thou hast done foolishly, and hast not kept the Commandments of thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established the Kingdom upon* Israel *for ever.* If *Saul* had stayed the Lords time, he would have

have eſtabliſhed the Kingdom upon *Iſrael* for ever: but he prevented the Lord's kindneſs, and offered Sacrifice unſeaſonably and ſinfully. So it is many times with a proud, pettiſh, raſh and diſtempered heart: if we have not what we would, and when we would, then we are all amort, and murmur, and ſay, Why ſhould we wait any longer? Thou haſt done fooliſhly. Haſt thou prayed and looked to the Promiſe thus long, and wilt thou now give over? The Lord would have comforted thee, hadſt thou gone on: but the Lord hath withdrawn himſelf from thee, becauſe thou haſt withdrawn thy heart from the Promiſe. When the carriage is heavy, and the way dead, there are many ſore pulls, and oft the Waggon is at a ſtand; and if a man ſhould then go away and give over, all his work were loſt. Therefore ſtay thou till the Lord ſhew mercy. Thus long thou haſt call'd, and ſought, and lookt up to the Promiſe, and waited upon the Lord, and attended upon the freeneſs of his grace, once more haply

haply would have done it: thy heart was almoſt humbled, thy ſin was almoſt conquered: Oh thou ſilly Soul, why didſt not thou hold it out? It would have come at the laſt, my life for thine. Now take heed of this; if the time ſeem tedious, and thy heart begins to ſink, and thy ſpirit is weary; take heed of flying off, take heed of ſhifting for thy own comfort, and looking to baſe ends and aims: no, hold thy mind to and keep thy eye of Faith upon the Promiſe, and ſtay it out till God ſee the time fit: and know, it's the beſt time, when it's God's time. In the 17. of the *Acts*, verſe 31. *Paul* ſays, *Except theſe abide in the ſhip, theſe cannot be ſafe.* Every man was skiping over-board to ſave himſelf: but *Paul* ſtayed them. A man would have thought otherwiſe; but the Apoſtle knew it was not ſo; for the Lord had revealed it to him. So I ſay, Be thy temptations never ſo ſtrong, and thy ſins never ſo many, and thou beginneſt to complain, and ſayeſt, I have cryed, Lord, and ſought earneſt-

earneſtly, and yet my condition is worſe, and my ſoul more ſinful, and I am leſs able to help my ſelf, there is no more ſuccour to be expected. Now take heed of going out of the ſhip, and from the uſe of means: keep in the ſhip; for in it you ſhall be ſafe. Keep in the Promiſe, and ſtill your hearts there: you ſhall have a happy arrival at Heaven, though it be upon a little broken board: it's no matter, ſtay God's time.

The fifth Direction. Yet haply the Lord ſeems ſometimes not only to delay his poor ſervants, and to withhold his favour; but he ſeems to frown, and ſay he will not hear; and he ſeems to be angry with the prayer of his ſervants, and with their importunity, and he ſeems as if he would not ſuccour and ſupply. Thus he dealt with *Jacob*, *Geneſis* 32. 26. there the Lord ſays, *Let me go*; I care not what becomes of thee, *Let me go*. But *Jacob* lays hold upon him, and would not let him go. So the laſt work of Faith is this. In a holy humility labour to contend with God, and

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by ſtrong hand overcome the Lord; for the Lord loves to be overcome thus. Be not ſaucy with the Lord; and in the ſenſe of thine own baſeneſs, as it were, catch the Lord Jeſus, and ſtrive with him; leave not till thou haſt thoſe comforts he hath promiſed, and thou haſt begged. This is the glory and victory of the triumph of Faith, that gives thee the day too, and lays down the weapons, and yields himſelf conquered: As it was with *Jacob*, when God ſaw he could not prevail, he ſaid, verſe 28. *Thy name ſhall no more be called* Jacob, *but* Iſrael, *becauſe thou haſt prevailed with God.* God is ready to give what he hath promiſed: but he will have us try the maſtery with him. God overcomes himſelf, and we by Faith in God overcome God: as *James* 2. 13. *Mercy triumphs over Juſtice.* Lord, ſaith my ſoul, Why ſhould not I have that mercy, ſupply and ſuccour? Saith Juſtice, Thou art a ſinful wretch, and thou haſt wronged me. Saith Anger, Thou haſt deſerved to be plagued: and there-

therefore thou ſhalt feel the ſmart of my diſpleaſure. Now Faith lays hold upon the riches of the freeneſs of God's mercy in Chriſt, and in him Juſtice is ſatisfied, and Anger appeaſed for all; and now Mercy is purchaſed for all, and mercy triumpheth over Juſtice, and Faith takes hold upon and overcomes God himſelf, as I may ſay, with a holy humble baſeneſs of heart. You know what the Lord did to the woman of *Canaan*: when ſhe had ſtriven with him a great while, and would take no denial, at laſt he ſaith, *O Woman, great is thy Faith, be it unto thee as thou wilt.* Take what thou wilt, if thou wilt have life for thy child, and peace for thine own conſcience, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt, take it; for it is all thine. He, as it were, turns her looſe to all his treaſury. If ſhe had gone away at the firſt or ſecond denial, ſhe had found no help: but becauſe ſhe held out, ſhe had all her hearts deſire. God would have us wreſtle with his Majeſty, that he may be overcome in mercy and

good-

goodneſs. I might have here taken ſome of the moſt deſperate caſes that could be, that you might have ſeen what Faith would have done in the midſt of the want of all means, and in the greateſt extremity that could have befaln a poor ſinner; but I paſs over that at this time. Now therefore conſider what hath been ſaid: lay theſe things up, and have them ever before you, and practiſe them: and by often writing, learn to write: and by often living, learn to live. Many people live poorly, and make a poor ſhift to go to Heaven: but I would not have a Chriſtian live ſo, but be Maſter of his Art. Know and ſee your way, and uſe the means. Labour to get good thereby, that you may have ſap, and the ſweet of the Promiſes, and ſo go ſinging, and rejoycing, and triumphing up to Heaven. Now that which I conclude withal, is this. You ſee how far the Lord hath brought us, how the Soul hath been prepared, and cut off from ſin and himſelf, if fitted for the Lord Jeſus by contrition and humiliation,

no, and that the Soul comes to ſee that there is no hope in the creatures, nor any ſuccour in Heaven, but in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and ſo at laſt the ſinner comes, and lies at the foot of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and knows that either he muſt be another man, or a damned man: now when he ſees that Prayer and all other means will not profit, and the power of the means yet prevails not, and the power of his corruptions is not yet maſtered: then he looks up to Chriſt, and is contented that he ſhould do what he will with him. Now when the Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſees him lie wearied thus with his corruptions, then the Lord gives ſpecial notice to his Soul, that it is his purpoſe to do him good, and that there is mercy for that broken heart of this. With that, Hope is ſtirred and Faith, is it poſſible? is it credible? Shall this wretchedneſs of mine be pardoned? Oh my deſire is kindled within me, and I long for that day. Oh that I might once ſee the Funeral of all my ſins! Mark now, how love and joy are cheared

to

to entertain this Mercy; and ſaith, Oh how is the Soul bound and engaged to God, that offers free and undeſerved grace to a ſtubborn and rebellious ſinner! At laſt the Will ſaith *Amen* to the promiſe, and further ſaith, Oh that mercy I will have! And thus the Soul is come home to God, by vocation. Now the Prodigal is come home to his Father, and the Father's heart leaps within his breaſt, when he ſees him lie at the door. And as the Father rejoyceth, ſo the Angels in Heaven rejoyce, and all the Faithful ſhall rejoyce, and ſay, Oh my Huſband, Oh my Father, Oh my Child, and my Wife that was a ſinful woman, is come home again, to her firſt and beſt Husband. You that have found it thus in your ſelves, be comforted: you that know it in others, rejoyce.

To ſum up all briefly, we ſee,

First, When he have pluckt away all carnal props, that then there is way made for the promiſe to come in to us.

Secondly,

Secondly, And when our hearts are poſſeſſed throughly of the ſufficiency of God's promiſe and grace that then the promiſe that draws near, begins its work.

Thirdly, That when we expect all from the Promiſe, even power to come to it, that then it lays faſt hold upon us.

Fourthly, That when we are content to yield to the juſt conditions of the Promiſe, then the Promiſe carries us and all in us.

Thus we have ſeen the hinderances removed, and the means propounded: and now that we may be moved and perſwaded importunately to ſeek after this bleſſed grace of God: let us further conſider thus much: namely, that if we once get this grace, we get all other graces with it, which is a ground of much comfort, & cannot but keep us doing: For will it not much encourage a man when in the doing of one work he knows he ſhall do another, nay, all his work with one labour! but ſo it is in the work of Faith. Oh then how

ſhould

ſhould it encourage us to labour for *Faith*, ſeeing that by getting it, we have all? Men that are wiſe to provide for themſelves, and to lay out their monies in ſome purchaſe for the beſt: when they ſee a ground well wooded and watered, but eſpecially to have ſome rich Mines in it, all their minds will be upon ſuch a place becauſe, having it, they have all with it: So it ſhould be here, in our deſires: and as there, ſo here: get grace, and get all: ſtrengthen here, and all is ſtrong: but want here, and want every where: having this grace of Faith, you need not ſeek for wiſdom: for Faith will make you wiſe to Salvation: and you need not labour for patience, for he that is faithful, will be patient: and ſo for other graces. He that hath the grace of Faith, hath them all, hath holineſs, hath cleanneſs, hath love, hath a pure mind, and good conſcience; and what hath he not? The Saints of God endeavour with much pains to get grace, and to ſubdue corruption: but becauſe they take not the right

Faith to be laboured for above all graces.

right way to it, they ſeek and not find.

Many a poor Soul mourns and cries to Heaven for mercy, and prays againſt a ſtubborn hard heart, and is weary of his life, becauſe this vile heart remains yet in him; and yet haply gets little or no redreſs: the reaſon is, and the main wound lies here; he goes the wrong way to work; for, he that would have grace muſt (firſt of all) get Faith, Faith will bring all the reſt; buy the field, and the Pearl is thine; it goes with the purchaſe, thou muſt not think with thine own ſtrugling to get the maſtery of a proud heart; for that will not do: but let thy Faith go firſt to Chriſt, and try what that can do. There are many graces neceſſary in this work; as meekneſs, patience, humility and wiſdom: now Faith will fetch all theſe, and poſſeſs the Soul of them. Brethren, therefore if you ſet any price upon theſe graces, buy the field, labour for Faith; get that, and you get all. The Apoſtle ſaith, *We all with open face beholding, as in a glaſs,*

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the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory. The Lord Christ is the glass, and the glorious grace of God in Christ, is that glory of the Lord: therefore first behold this grace in Christ by Faith (and thou must so, before thou canst receive grace.) First, See humility in Christ, and then fetch it thence: first see strength and courage in him, whereby to enable thy weak heart, and strength will come; there fetch it, and there have it. Would you then have a meek, gracious and humble heart? I dare say for some of you, that you had rather have it than any thing under Heaven, and would think it the best bargain that ever you made; which is the cause why you say, O that I could once see that day, that this proud heart of mine might be humbled: Oh if I could see the last blood of my sins, I should then think my self happy, none more, and desire to live no longer. But is this thy desire, poor Soul? then get Faith, and to buy the whole, for they all go together: nor think

think to have them upon any price, not having Faith: I mean patience, and meekneſs, and the humble heart: but buy Faith the field, and you have the Pearl. Further, would you have the glory of God under eye, and be more Heavenly minded? then look to it, and get it by the eye of Faith: look up to it in the face of Jeſus Chriſt, and then you ſhall ſee it; and then hold you there: for there, and there only, this viſion of the glory of God is to be ſeen, to your everlaſting peace and endleſs comfort. When men uſe to make a purchaſe, they ſpeak of all the commodities of it; as, That there is ſo much wood, worth ſo much; and ſo much ſtock worth ſo much, and then they offer for the whole, anſwerable to theſe ſeverals. So here there is *Item* for an Heavenly mind, and that's worth thouſands; and *Item* for an humble heart, and that's worth millions: aud ſo for the reſt. And are thoſe graces ſo much worth? what is Faith worth then? Hence, we may conclude, and ſay, Oh precious Faith!

Faith! precious indeed, that is able to bring ſo many, nay, all graces with it: as one degree of grace after another: and grace here, and happineſs for ever hereafter. If we have but the hearts of men (I do not ſay of Chriſtians) methinks this that is ſpoken of Faith, ſhould provoke us to labour always, above all things, for this bleſſed grace of God, the grace of Faith.

FINIS.

A

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OF

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